

Contents

The US Empire's war on the poor	1
Globalisation – the latest stage of imperialism	5
The working class and its leadership	
The Universal Class	7
Trade unions and the onslaught of globalisation	9
The Trade Union Bureaucracy	10
Social Democracy	12
Stalinism	14
The Anticapitalist Movement	17
The Old Illusions of the New Anarchists	18
Populism against the people	21
Islamism – an anti-imperialist force?	22
A programme of transitional demands	
The nature of transitional demands	25
Globalisation from below	25
Destroy the IMF, World Bank and WTO	27
Fighting inflation and deflation	28
The scourge of unemployment	29
Social ownership and planned economy	30
Transform the trade unions	30
Workers' control, and the fight against business secrecy	32
Reclaim our environment	33
Strategy and tactics in the semi-colonies	35
Revolution in the countryside	36
National liberation	37
Tear up racism by its roots	38
Women's liberation	41
Free sexuality from state and religion	42
Liberation for the youth	43
The struggle against fascism	45
Against militarism and imperialist war	46
The state	48
Democratic rights	49
Defending our struggles — preparing our power	50
A government of the workers and poor peasants	51
Workers' councils and the struggle for working class power	52
The insurrection	53
A revolution against the state	54
Forward to the formation of a Fifth International - a new Global Party of Socialist Revolution	55

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PREFACE

Over the last five years, around the world, a mass movement has emerged which once again names capitalism as the principal obstacle to human freedom and prosperity. This movement, variously described as 'anti-corporate', 'anti-globalisation' and 'anti-capitalist', has, to some extent, agreed what it is against. What the movement does not agree on, as supporters of the current order never fail to point out, is what it is for.

At the same time, in a number of countries, sections of the working class movement have begun to question the right wing reformist leaders who have dominated the "socialist", "communist" and "labour" parties for so long. Many of these parties moved far to the right in the 1990s, renouncing any identification with the working class or any aspiration to transcend capitalism. They pushed privatisation and supported globalisation. Today they either support George Bush's War on Terrorism or criticise it only in the mildest way.

The time is ripe for the militant mass organisations of the working class and the radicalised youth to unite in action and to determine - in open and democratic debate - a new strategy for this movement.

And that is why this document was written.

While no programme is ever final, complete, finished or settled, we believe that the measures it sets out, if adopted, would abolish capitalism altogether.

It is fashionable today to describe claims like these as arrogant or doctrinaire. The idea is that anyone bold enough to write a guide to action to an entire international movement is either self-deluded or cynically manipulative.

But these arguments do not stand up to scrutiny. In every other sphere of activity, it is perfectly normal to write down the lessons learnt so far and to codify the best way to proceed. So why should the greatest endeavour of all - the struggle for socialism - be treated any differently? Behind the notion that revolutionary change is too complex to be codified lies a deep-seated prejudice which is systematically encouraged by the exploiters - that the project of global change is too demanding for the subordinate classes to carry it out. Best not to try.

At the same time, of course, reformists, parliamentarians, gradualists, anarchists and liberals have had no qualms in pressing forward with their own programmes for the new movement. Though they vary widely, all are agreed on one thing: the working class must not organise itself with the aim of taking power.

This programme takes the opposite view - that the conquest of power by the working class is desirable, possible and the precondition for the elimination of capitalism. We have prepared it and published it with the express aim of convincing as many people as possible to support and promote it, as an alternative both to the movement's current inchoate melange of aims and to the reformist programmes which, if adopted, would mean nothing less than prostration before the bourgeois order.

iv From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

We appeal to activists and organisations within the working class, anti-capitalist, youth and peasant movements to consider this programme and, where necessary, to propose changes and amendments to it. The organisation that is publishing the programme, the League for the Fifth International, adopted it at its Congress in 2003. Doubtless there are many areas that need expansion. As a tendency based mainly in Europe, we recognise that we may have failed to reflect or address experiences elsewhere. If there are errors within it, we pledge ourselves to correct them. We believe that if agreement can be reached between groupings on the basis of a common programme, they should fuse their forces and strengthen revolutionary organisation globally, through the foundation of a new global party of social revolution.

Richard Brenner, Dave Stockton

October 2003

THE US EMPIRE'S WAR ON THE POOR

The United States of America is the mightiest empire the world has ever seen. No Emperor, Tsar, King or Fuhrer ever held such global power as the American President wields today.

The USA stations troops on every continent – it spends more on arms than the next fifteen strongest states combined. The president casually informs sovereign peoples who they can choose as their leaders. He judges which states have failed and which must face regime change. And he passes sentence: economic blockade, carpet bombing or full-scale invasion and occupation.

A handful of major states – the G8 – can try to influence, modify or delay his actions. But they cannot to bend his will to theirs. All other states in the world, though formally independent, are subservient to the sole superpower, many of them totally dependent on the USA.

With the twin towers of the World Trade Centre still burning, President George W. Bush declared an endless war on all who resist or rebel against the power of America. On the pretext of defending his people against terrorism, Bush set out a new justification for aggression – the right to launch pre-emptive action against anyone he says threatens US interests.

He called it “homeland defence”. But whose homeland is he defending? Not the homes, living standards or liberties of the working people of the United States. The interests of the USA's ruling class – ‘hawk’ and ‘dove’, Republican and Democrat, oil magnate and high-tech billionaire – run directly contrary to those of the great majority of its citizens.

In the USA and other highly developed countries the rich and powerful are pursuing a relentless assault on the living standards of the majority. Welfare is stripped away, rates of pay are held down or cut, and the burden of taxation is systematically shifted from the rich to the poor. Education is steadily converted from a general right to a private privilege; benefits and pensions are slashed. For working people, modern life means permanent insecurity from cradle to grave.

When the White House bombs Baghdad, arms Tel Aviv and levies tribute from cruelly underdeveloped countries, it acts not for its people but for the ‘right’ of its giant banks and corporations to exploit the whole globe.

Outside the USA and other Western oases of ‘development’, the global system denies two thirds of the world's population enough food to eat and clean water to drink. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia, mass unemployment coexists with cruel underdevelopment. Despite a superabundance of resources and products, the ‘free market’ cannot banish famine from Africa or provide medicine for millions of AIDS sufferers.

The system the USA is fighting for – global capitalism – makes a sustainable future for the globe impossible. It blocks relief to the crippling burden of foreign debt; it prevents concerted action against climate change; it threatens fratricidal wars over oil and water supplies; it foment ethnic cleansing and the mass flight of hundreds of thousands of refugees.

And capitalism's destructive work is far from done. It is creating economic crisis, trade wars, clashes between Europe and America. The very aggression and arrogance of the USA and its British ally are forcing other powers to combine against them. In the decade ahead – at first covertly and then more openly – this alliance against the USA will harden. Sooner or

2 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

later a new hi-tech arms race will break out. The spectre of another world war – distant as yet – appears on the horizon of the new century.

Who benefits? An infinitesimal minority. Never in human history have so few owned and disposed of the products of the labour of so many. As a result, never before has the gap between rich and poor been so wide. As the last century closed, the richest 225 people had a combined wealth greater than that of the poorest 47 percent of the world's population.

The capitalists' much-vaunted democracy is strictly limited and curtailed. Money buys access to influence, mass communication and the levers of power; representatives are neither accountable nor recallable; the real decisions are made not in the legislative talking shops but behind closed doors by unelected civil servants, generals, police and security officers – all bound to the ruling elite of multi-millionaires by a thousand personal, cultural and class ties.

And at the workplace gate, even the appearance of democracy vanishes. The individual worker in the factory, office, call centre or fast-food outlet can expect neither security nor rights. Workers have no right to determine hiring, firing and conditions of labour, let alone the fate of their products.

At the ballot box and at work, the citizen cannot change anything of real importance. So what choice is left? Why, reply the apologists of capitalism, the answer is obvious: consumer choice ... if you can afford it. Two thirds of humanity can't.

Even for those who can exercise "consumer choice", what a narrow and impoverished choice it is. A selection of meaningless brands and empty "values", carefully devised by marketing executives who are well rewarded for turning deception into a science. They stop us controlling our own lives and offer us a choice of life styles instead. Consumerism – the cult of the commodity – has become the true religion of our age. The chance to "buy into" a branded dream world is now the soul of our soulless condition.

Scores of millions are casting off this gaudy blindfold. Working class people want change. A new movement has erupted against capitalist globalisation and imperialist war. There have been huge demonstrations wherever the leaders of the world financial system have held their summits. Trade unionists have linked up with new social movements to oppose the World Trade Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the attacks on Afghanistan and Iraq. Solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinians against the USA's Israeli gendarme in the Middle East unites the movement in the west with anti-imperialist movements in the third world.

On one day in February 2003, more than twenty million people demonstrated against the attack on Iraq in every major city of the world.

Everywhere new forces are resisting – but everywhere they encounter old obstacles. The movement is diverted, held back, divided and compromised by the living embodiment of the defeats of the twentieth century – the cynical bureaucracies that control the trade unions, the pro-capitalist leaders of the Social Democratic or Labour parties, the abject reformists of the traditional Communist Parties.

If the new anticapitalist initiatives fuse with the class struggles in the "first" and the "third" worlds, this movement can form a new International, a world party committed to a programme of global revolution. But in the global north and south alike, union federations and "workers' parties" are obstructing this unification.

The removal of these misleaders is the burning task of the period ahead. New leaders must replace them – not another set of unaccountable bureaucrats but democratically elected and recallable representatives that can express the will of the workers and youth themselves. We need not overpaid officials with a personal interest in compromise but fighters, determined to mobilise millions not just to resist the capitalists but for an alternative to the system itself.

And there is an alternative. A new social system can be built based on co-operation instead of competition, on democratic planning instead of the market. This system has a name: socialism.

The world is more than ready for it. Already humanity produces a superabundance of necessities and luxuries alike. Global production could meet the needs of all if it were organised to do so.

The vast extension of formal education and the development of information technology mean that a worldwide plan of production and distribution could be drawn up democratically, genuinely involving the producers and consumers themselves. The present sophisticated planning between units of the same multinational or between the warehouse and supermarket can be applied to the whole global system of exchange in goods and services. We could determine priorities democratically and share the work between all those able to work. With every new labour-saving advance, instead of throwing people out of work we could steadily reduce the length of the working week and lighten the load on all of us.

Capitalism has paved the way for this global transformation. It has created a world economy and global communications. And it has created an international working class – billions strong, better organised and more closely connected than ever before. But there are two great obstacles to further advance, two great evils that hold humanity in servitude. The first is private ownership of industry, banking and the land. The second is the armed power of the capitalist nation state.

All history proves that the capitalists will never relinquish their property peacefully – to claim otherwise in the age of 'Shock and Awe' is either hopeless naivety or wilful deception. There is only one way: their apparatus of state repression must be overthrown by force. The capitalists' monopoly of military power – armies, police and security forces, prison systems, civil servants, judiciaries – must be smashed to pieces and replaced with the rule of the working people themselves.

This can be done – the majority of humanity can cast off the tiny minority of parasites. It will take mass organisation, an unambiguous strategy and, when the hour strikes, courageous and ruthless action.

Some may balk at this, but the alternative to revolution is not decades of undisturbed peace. Basing a global civilisation on the empowerment of a few thousand and the impoverishment of six billion is like lodging depth charges in the planetary core. If the logic of capitalism is left to unfold, our world will be torn apart by starvation, disease, poverty, environmental catastrophe, and war.

In the struggle against capitalism, greater energy is equivalent to greater humanity. For with the suppression of our exploiters and an end to the tyranny of profit, human history can truly begin.

4 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

GLOBALISATION – THE LATEST STAGE OF IMPERIALISM

Five hundred huge international capitalist corporations – all based in one or other of the advanced capitalist powers but the majority in the USA – hold our planet in a vice-like grip. In the last decade of the twentieth century, this system was given a new name: globalisation.

Globalisation is an intensification of capitalism's latest stage: imperialism, the rule of monopoly or finance capital. In this stage capitalism is no longer necessary to develop the forces of production; it plays no progressive role. Indeed, it repeatedly destroys, by crisis and war, the possibility of a productive, prosperous and safe existence for the majority of humanity.

Imperialism remorselessly centralises economic life in the hands of a tiny elite. The various branches of the economy – banking, industry and commerce – fuse into finance capital. Money moves rapidly around the globe in search of the highest profits. The export of money capital – foreign direct investment, loans and other financial operations – far outweighs the export of products.

The latest globalisation phase of imperialism dates from the 1980s, when a political and economic offensive from the United States began. This restored US domination over the Third World, the former Soviet Union and America's capitalist rivals in Europe and Japan.

It led to a broadening and deepening of the rule of finance capital across the planet. It was a broadening in that the bureaucratically planned economies of the USSR, Eastern Europe and China gave way to the market, dramatically so after 1989. It was a deepening in that restrictions on finance capital were removed. Barriers to trade and investment in the South by multinational companies were torn down. Existing international economic agencies (IMF, World Bank) were transformed into debt enforcers and the World Trade Organisation was formed to fight for the multinationals' global interests. The stock market and the expansion of debt became the mainsprings of "wealth creation". On this basis a feverish round of concentration and centralisation of capital began.

Globalisation's instruments, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, now demand that all countries carry out the same neo-liberal economic and social policy. They insist that there is no alternative to free trade, the opening up of markets, the privatisation of industries, telecommunications, the media, transport, utilities like water, gas, electricity, services like hospitals, schools, care for the elderly and the disabled. All have to yield a profit for the few before they can be offered to the many ... if they can afford it.

Global capitalism rests on the exploitation of the workers in the imperialist countries and on the super-exploitation of its former colonies in the "Third World". Mining and energy corporations, agribusinesses, banks: all use their technological, financial and trading monopoly powers to seize the raw materials and resources of underdeveloped countries. Other corporations set up production in countries where they can exploit workers even more than they could "at home". The reason: dictatorial regimes and lower standards of living.

6 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

The weak and corrupt ruling classes of the “Third World” have long since abandoned any thought of challenging their former colonial overlords. They act instead as agents for the multinational corporations and the G8. Their local armies and police forces are trained and armed by the USA and the European powers. The CIA and MI6 instruct their secret police in the repressive arts. If any of these states step out of line, a rapid reaction force is sent in to “restore order”.

These “independent” states are anything but. Whenever the peoples of these semi-colonies force their corrupt and oppressive governments to resist, the counterattack is truly brutal.

Yet despite the scale of US domination, imperialism is not a system run by one power alone. It is a system of rivalry and competition for the world’s markets by competing corporations. Only a few of them are fully international. Most are rooted in their home states or trading blocks. Economic rivalry forces the capitalists to use these states and blocs against each other. Trade conflicts burst out; struggles erupt over valuable economic resources. By the very nature of the system, rivalries will sharpen. Today’s reluctant allies are tomorrow’s bitter enemies.

The European Union is forming as a large imperialist bloc. The ruling classes of Germany and France are taking up the challenge of the USA. Russia and China are trying to resist total dependence on the USA, EU or Japan. This has caused a collapse in the prestige of international institutions like the UN and NATO. The US’s current unilateralism is therefore not a sign of unrivalled strength. It is a pre-emptive strike to buttress its temporary world domination against the challenge of emerging rivals.

Fear and insecurity are once more beginning to stalk this “most perfect” of economic systems. Instead of limitless economic expansion, capitalist globalisation threatens humanity with a new period of stagnation and crisis, a struggle to dominate markets and territories. For the middle class and the workers, currency and stock market crashes can destroy a lifetime’s savings. Trade wars threaten to wreck entire industries. In short, a new period of capitalist crises, wars and, therefore, of social revolution lies ahead of us.

THE WORKING CLASS AND ITS LEADERSHIP

The Universal Class

Powerful as the world's rulers are, there is one force that can master them. Against the billionaires stand the billions of wage earners who make and circulate their profits. In daily resistance around the world, from strikes to uprisings, the power of the working class is revealed. Without our work not a cent goes into the bank accounts of the billionaires – when we all act together the whole machinery of exploitation comes to a halt.

The working class produces everything and can produce it without the exploiters – so long as we are united and conscious of what we want.

The capitalists try and stop us. They try to divide us and dull our consciousness. To do this they fill our heads with racial and religious prejudices. Their strongest weapons are to set the workers of one nation against another, to set men against women, to set white against black. That is why the slogan of Karl Marx in the Communist Manifesto has been taken up by generations of workers: “Working People of All Countries Unite!”

The ruling class tries to convince the working class either that it does not exist as a class, or that it is in terminal decline. Both claims are false.

The industrial working class is growing globally, especially in developing countries like India, Brazil, Korea, Nigeria and China. Workers in core industries of capitalism – transport, machinery, energy and automobiles – have enormous power that can be coordinated in international struggle.

Academic charlatans claim that the “middle class” is replacing the proletariat. Outside the USA and Europe this is demonstrably false – huge numbers of former peasants and artisans have been sucked into the new working class. Industries like textiles move around the globe transforming rural workers into industrial workers in a matter of months.

But in the most advanced countries this is false too. While there has been a relative decline in the numbers of industrial workers as a proportion of the workforce in the USA and Europe, the great majority of the new “white collar” and “service” workers remain wage slaves. As old industries disappear, new ones arise. The working class is not disappearing – it is changing with the technological base of capitalism itself.

To ‘prove’ that the working class is declining or disappearing, the bourgeois theorists wheel out a fantastical array of competing definitions of class. Whether you earn \$2 a day or \$50 dollars a day; whether you wear a collar or overalls; whether you work on a keyboard or a lathe; whether you perform manual or intellectual labour; whether or not you aspire to own a house and car ... each of these has been cited as key issues to ‘prove’ the decline of the working class. Each is based on a superficial sociological description rather than fundamental social relationships.

The working class is that part of humanity that lives by selling its power to work. The proletariat is not owned by the capitalist – but neither does the proletariat own any means of production apart from this labour power. Though we are legally free when compared to the slaves and serfs of old, we are unfree because we are compelled to sell our labour time to the capitalist in return for a wage. If we do not, we starve.

8 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

In this fundamental respect, the working class exists, is bigger than ever before in human history, but still remains a class of wage-slaves.

The capitalists insist that the workers are not exploited, except perhaps by a few unscrupulous employers who go too far. Most of us, they say, are paid a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. We have not been compelled to work for them – we do so because we choose it. It is a fair deal – they provide us with work and in return we are paid a wage.

But beneath the facade of this free and equal contract lies systematic exploitation. Our wages reflect only a fraction of the value of the total social product we have created. Wages are set at roughly the price of the goods and services we must buy to stay alive and get back to work the next day – the cost of reproducing our labour power. Yet every worker creates more value than this in a day's work – the capitalist appropriates the surplus. This takes the form of the capitalists' ownership of the mass of commodities. The capitalists share and circulate the profits among themselves through commerce, credit and rent.

Our servitude lies in the very system of wage slavery itself. This means we cannot free ourselves without freeing the whole of humanity from the tyranny of the market, capital and class division. In this sense we are the universal class – our struggle will continue until social wealth is held in common and classes themselves are confined to the museum of history.

Communism, therefore, is not a utopian scheme for the reorganisation of society according to principles devised by this or that dreamer. It is the necessary outcome of the struggle of working people everywhere. The workers' struggle has objectively communist goals and can end only when the emancipation of all humanity has been secured.

The capitalists are engaged in a permanent ideological struggle to cause workers to forget that we are a class and to refrain from acting as a class. But their own system permanently reproduces and reinforces the conditions that oblige us to recognise ourselves as a class, organise ourselves as a class and struggle as a class. The capitalists need the working class for without us they could not exist. The workers do not need the capitalists because without them we shall all share the work and no classes will exist. This is the capitalists' unique historical tragedy. We will not shed a tear for them.

Class consciousness appears and reappears wherever there is struggle and organisation – in trade unions, in parties, in popular committees and co-operatives. These organisations grow and decline, are destroyed and are reborn. They are transformed by capitalism's economic cycles, and by the victories and defeats of working class battles.

In itself, the struggle of workers against their employers for higher wages or better conditions of work need not challenge the essence of capital – its exploitation of wage labour and appropriation of surplus value. The trade union struggle tends to aim for a better price for the workers' labour time within the system of exploitation. But only fools or cynics could believe that this renders it meaningless or irrelevant to the struggle against capitalism.

The higher meaning of every working class struggle is that it brings workers together in combination, brings into focus our common interests and ability to act, brings us into closer connection with militants in other branches of industry and soci-

ety at large and provides us with a practical basis on which to compare the results and outcomes of our activity. It brings us into contact with the traditions and experiences of the entire working class movement, past and present, at home and abroad, and – crucially – it acquaints the most militant workers with the communist theory of Marxism, which is bound up indissolubly with the history of the workers’ movement and which most clearly expresses its meaning and its goals.

The sharper the struggle and the higher the level of organisation achieved, the more readily workers take up these ideas, which lay bare the real basis of capitalist society and chart the way forward to social revolution. While the economic struggle of the workers against their employers does not spontaneously challenge the roots of exploitation, it increases the organisation and confidence of the workers, bringing nearer the day when the communist part of the working class can succeed in uniting the workers’ movement in revolutionary political struggle against capital.

The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself. But this self-emancipation can only be a conscious act, guided by an advanced theory, organised through a disciplined and professional class party, led by the most committed militants elected from the ranks of the workers’ movement itself.

Trade unions and the onslaught of globalisation

All over the world workers have turned to their trade union organisations to resist the effects of capitalist globalisation.

Despite constant attempts by the capitalist class to dismiss them as outmoded, to restrict their activities through repressive laws and to persecute their leaders and activists, trade unions refuse to disappear. The reason is simple – everywhere capital forces workers to combine against their employers to defend their pay and conditions of work. It is here that broad layers of the working class first gain experience of struggle. For this reason trade unions remain, in the words of Frederick Engels, “schools for socialism”.

Nevertheless, over the last two decades the trade unions were unable to resist the global onslaught of capital. Once powerful unions were humbled and destroyed – whole industries were savaged. In the USA and Europe demoralisation spread as globalisation was used to intimidate workers, their union leaders and political parties.

By the 1990s, governments and employers only had to mention “globalisation” to secure the submission of many unions to the needs of corporate capital. Whole industries were moved to low wage countries where workers’ rights were few or non-existent. Moreover, a huge increase in the “permanent” reserve army of labour occurred. In the advanced capitalist countries, unemployment stands at 38 million and globally more than 1 billion are out work.

The impact on the private sector was severe. For the great majority of private sector workers, real wages have fallen, including in the USA. Even where pay remained stable – as in Europe – work has intensified and has become far less secure. In the late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s levels of union representation, workplace organisation and strike action fell dramatically.

10 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

In the public sector, privatisation and spending cuts have led to closures of services and mass sackings. Wages have stagnated and conditions of employment have worsened dramatically, especially for those workers ‘outsourced’ – essentially sold off to private employers. Nevertheless, in many countries, public sector workers have formed the backbone of working class resistance and of national trade union movements.

At the same time, the working class has grown in new sectors of the economy and in many countries of the third world. This has given rise to a vast unorganised sector of the international working class. Mainly young, often female, often immigrant workers work with minimal job security, the lowest wages, poor or non-existent sick pay, an almost complete absence of meaningful health and safety protection.

As with the unemployed, these insecure low paid workers have been used to undermine the bargaining position of unionised labour. And yet, perversely, in country after country, the unions have done next to nothing to help the new layers of workers or the unemployed workers fight back, often refusing to organise them or even to allow them into the unions.

The capitalists have given a new name to these low paid workers and the unemployed, one that expresses both contempt and fear: “the underclass”. But this “underclass” is beginning to organise, as in Argentina, with its piqueteros movement and popular assemblies.

The oppression that these workers suffer makes it impossible to organise them by traditional, tired, class collaborationist, bureaucratic methods. Wherever in the last two decades workers have effectively struggled against the bosses’ attacks, they have done it with new methods, new leaders and sometimes new trade unions. Confrontations with employers, militant tactics, mass pickets, occupations, strikes and international solidarity are all necessary. These methods have been made illegal in most countries – “democratic” or dictatorial – for the simple reason that they are uniquely effective.

It falls to the rank and file trade unionists to bring life into these methods for one simple reason: routinist and legalist trade union leaders will oppose any disturbance of their cosy relations with the employers and their state.

The Trade Union Bureaucracy

The upper ranks of the trade unions are not simply controlled by individual misleaders. The full-time officials constitute a conservative caste – a distinct social formation with its own interests separate and opposed to those of the majority of union members. Instead of being under the control of the members, the officials control the apparatus and through them control the members. This is what the very word bureaucracy means: the rule of the office-holder.

The bureaucrats derive privileges from their role as negotiators with the capitalists. They earn more than the average wage of the members – they gain entry into the charmed circles of the bourgeoisie and public life. As a result this bureaucracy tends everywhere to accommodate itself politically to the capitalist system and is frequently incorporated into the lower echelons of the capitalist state. It acts as the labour lieutenant of capital inside the working class.

To the workers it preaches a reformist policy that leaves the fundamental levers of exploitation and control in the hands of the bourgeois. When workers' discontent breaks out the bureaucrats try to calm things down and avoid militant action.

When the patience of the workers is exhausted, the union leaders may reluctantly allow action so as not to lose support. Then they speak out, sometimes with radical phrases. At the same time, they limit action to symbolic protests, to one-day strikes or series of stoppages. The effect is to exhaust and demoralise the activists, preparing the way for a negotiated settlement falling far short of the workers' demands.

In response militant workers will seek to replace these leaders, electing officials who promise a more sustained challenge to the employers. Even where left wing officials espouse anticapitalist policies or promote unlimited strike action, they tend everywhere to leave the caste power of the bureaucracy itself intact. The workers are left relying on the courage and incorruptibility of just one individual – moreover an individual who will of necessity come under the most tremendous pressure from the employers and bourgeois society as a whole. Examples abound of such left wing officials collapsing in the heat of struggle.

Even where they are forced to fight they refrain from appealing over the heads of the leaders of other unions for workers in other industries to take solidarity action. Replacing right wing bureaucrats with left wing bureaucrats – while representing a step forward – is therefore cruelly insufficient. Unless the roots of bureaucracy are ripped out, we cannot regain control of our unions and pursue union struggles to victory.

The bureaucracy is no accidental phenomenon, no mere alien imposition on the trade unions. Its social basis lies in the emergence of a skilled aristocracy of labour. In many countries trade unions still mainly organise the skilled workers and the better off sections of the working class with less precarious conditions of life. This is because these workers have stronger bargaining power because of their concentration in large workplaces and their high levels of education and training. But these strengths are often combined with sectionalism, craft consciousness and a lack of concern for the working class as a whole. These influences can lead to the unions pursuing only their specific interests, to sectionalism and narrow craft consciousness. These practices and attitudes form a secure basis for the privileges of the trade union bureaucracy.

This bureaucracy will not disappear overnight, but it can be overthrown – by organising the rank and file to assert control, by mobilising not only the skilled layers but the poor, low-paid and downtrodden sections of the workers, and by a sustained political challenge.

The bureaucratic caste is not only bereft of fighting spirit – it is also bereft of theory. Lacking any analysis of capitalism as a system, it cannot understand or explain why the capitalists should continually attack the workers' living standards, why every reform we secure immediately comes under attack by the bourgeoisie who are determined to reverse it, why the employers' imperatives of profit accumulation demand that they drive down the workers' share of the social product.

Therefore when the bosses claim that the workers' demands would destroy an enterprise by rendering it unprofitable, the bureaucrats can only plead helplessly or warn the workers to restrain themselves. When the bosses cite globalisation as a reason to shift production abroad where labour is cheaper, the bureaucrats all too often slip into nationalist demagoguery rather than promoting the international solidarity of the workers.

12 From Protest to Power – Manifesto for World Revolution

Without a theory of capitalism, the union bureaucrats quickly and unthinkingly espouse ... the theory of the capitalists.

By contrast, the rank and file of the unions have no objective interest in maintaining the system of capitalist exploitation. On the contrary: to escape the treadmill of constant battles over wage and working conditions, the exploitative system of wage-labour and capital has to be abolished.

Union bureaucrats are agents of the capitalists – but they are agents operating inside the working class movement. The exceptionally dangerous role they play demands in response an exceptionally serious and sustained challenge from the workers.

In section three of this manifesto, we will examine what form this challenge might take. For now we will restrict ourselves to summarising its aims: reconquest of the trade unions as instruments of workers' struggle; the organisation into trade unions of the unorganised masses through a policy of militant class struggle; replacement of pliant union officials with proven class fighters; globalisation of trade union organisation through reciprocal bonds of solidarity; the democratisation of trade unions so that they can serve only the workers, and not as instruments of discipline in the hands of the employers.

These goals can be expressed in the single slogan: dissolution of the trade union bureaucracy.

Social Democracy

For ninety years social democracy has betrayed the working class. Yet still it lives. The task of the new generation of workers and anticapitalists is to deliver its death blow.

To do this we must first understand what social democracy is.

The working class movement is made up not only of unions but also of parties. These include the social democratic, socialist and Labour parties of Europe and Australasia. Most recently, we have seen the rise of the Workers' Party (PT) of Brazil.

Built and supported by the organisations of the working class, these parties remain committed to capitalism in policy and action. They are bourgeois workers' parties.

How is this possible? The answer lies in their history, structure and role.

At the outbreak of the First World War, the leaders of the major parties of the Second International, "Marxist" or Labourist alike, declared loyalty to "their own" imperialist fatherlands.

They abandoned the struggle for a classless society based on social ownership of the means of production. Instead they limited themselves to reforming capitalism. Since then they have never wavered in their loyalty to the exploiters, especially in times of war or crisis.

Parties once based on militant class struggle became entirely focused on parliament and winning elections as the only way to improve the workers' wages and conditions of life. Their message was simple: "Limit election manifestos to whatever will win the maximum number of votes. Leave socialism and internationalism for speeches on May Day."

At the same time, they retained their roots in the workers' organisations, with the

purpose of incorporating them into capitalism. They maintained intimate links with the trade unions by direct affiliation, organising political fractions in the unions, or simply by ensuring a massive presence amongst their leaders and militants. To maintain these “organic links” they had to promise to “defend” unions, wage levels, social reforms and democratic rights – always of course by legal and peaceful means.

They claimed to represent the independence of the workers’ movement from the openly capitalist parties at parliamentary and municipal elections. Social reforms after the Second World War strengthened the illusions of millions of workers that these parties could either reform capitalism or even replace it with a new society.

Even now, in elections, they still dominate their national working class movements.

But over the last decades even the parliamentary deputies and the union bureaucrats have been pushed to the sidelines. Party membership shrank dramatically and the internal life of the parties withered away. The activist base was decimated; the left wings were silenced, expelled or abandoned the parties in droves. In some cases smaller reformist parties were formed by the disillusioned left.

With neo-liberalism’s triumphant march in the 1990s, the journalists and academics predicted that social democracy was outmoded, would never win power again and would, in short, disappear. They were wrong.

The revival of trade union struggle and the growth of broader social movements in Europe in the 1990s led to election victories for social democratic and labour parties. But if workers hoped to see major social reforms, such as those of the post-war years, they were disappointed.

Social democracy accepts the dictates of neo-liberalism and globalisation. Blair’s “Third Way” and Schroeder’s “New Centre” promote market forces at the expense of the old Keynesian programme of social democracy. They argue that there is no alternative to privatisation of industries, infrastructure and telecommunications. Taxes on business have to be lowered, public expenditure cut, and workers’ rights in the workplace diluted or scrapped. In preparation for privatisation they drag the social welfare system into partnership with the private sector. In some countries campaigning and militant action has been able to slow this process – making a confrontation between social democracy and the working class all but inevitable.

In preparation for this and under cover of the “war against terrorism”, social democratic governments have pursued a vicious attack on the civil liberties of their citizens. At the same time, alarmed by the rise of racist right-wing parties, the social democrats have tried to steal their colours with disgraceful attacks on the rights of immigrants and refugees.

In periods of radicalisation, these parties usually develop a left wing whose speciality is to “lead” in order to behead the struggle. Just as in government these parties naturally expose themselves and disillusion their working class supporters, so in opposition, they renew these illusions.

Revolutionaries are currently a small minority in most countries. Our primary task is to break the illusions of the working class in reformist leaderships. But propaganda alone is not enough. We have to work patiently alongside reformist workers, demanding that social democratic and labour leaders fight for the workers’ interests and so demonstrate in prac-

tice the betrayals of these leaders. Only in this way can the revolutionaries convince large sections of the working class movement to organise a new political party which is truly its own, and wrest leadership of the movement from social democracy and Labourism.

Only then will Rosa Luxemburg's description of social democracy's politics ring true also for its organisation: a rotten corpse.

Stalinism

As the social democrats associate themselves ever more openly with capitalism, what of the "Communists"? Will the mounting resistance breathe life into them again?

These parties grew like wildfire all over the world in the aftermath of the twentieth century's most seismic event, the Russian Revolution. Yet, far from applying the lessons of 1917 and spreading social revolution across the globe, the Communist Parties instead put into practice theories devised by Soviet leaders after 1923 in the long years of the USSR's degeneration and decline.

The distinctive feature of the Communist Parties was their support for the policies of the Soviet bureaucracy as it established its dictatorship in the Soviet Union. The Stalin faction reversed the Bolshevik programme of working class democracy, democratic planning and the spread of socialist revolution across the world.

The new policy of "Socialism in One Country" was imposed on the Communist Parties in the Soviet Union and abroad by a series of purges and assassinations.

Within the Soviet Union, the utopian attempt to build "Socialism in One Country" justified the use of terror to industrialise and collectivise agriculture. Abroad, it subordinated the domestic policies of national parties to the foreign policy of the Great Russian bureaucracy and its relations with the imperialist powers – even where this led to the defeat of the Communist Parties themselves, like in China, Germany and Spain.

Liberation movements in colonial and backward countries were counselled to advance only to the "stage" of democratic capitalism, disorganising and disarming the forces of the working class and leaving power in the hands of the local agents of imperialism.

In the west, the Communist Parties evolved into carbon copies of the social democrats, advocating the utopia of reform, not the necessity of revolution, and proposing "broad" alliances with "patriotic" sections of the national capitalist class. The only thing that marked out the Communist Parties was their support for the Soviet Union.

Where Communist Parties took power in Eastern Europe after World War Two and in China in 1949 after a long peasant war, they imposed on their nations a replica of Stalin's USSR. The capitalists were dispossessed, but the Stalinists preserved the institutions of the bourgeois state – standing army, permanent bureaucracy and police.

The programme of working class democracy – a planned economy under the control of elected workers' councils, defended by the armed people itself – was abandoned in favour of bureaucratic planning by a brutal dictatorship that crushed all working class opposition. Even where their seizure of power was supported by the working class and peasant masses, as in Cuba and Vietnam, the Stalinists repaid their proletarian supporters by excluding them from any control over social, political and economic life.

Internationalism was replaced by a sickening national chauvinism as rival bureaucratic castes pursued their own fratricidal interests. In the USSR, national minorities were persecuted and transported; in Cambodia and the Balkans they were subjected to genocide.

These were not socialist policies. These were not socialist countries. Under the dead weight of the bureaucratic caste, the Communist Parties led these degenerated workers' states away from the socialist goals and methods of the Russian Revolution and, step by step, moved back towards capitalism.

Under the pressure of imperialist encirclement, the arms race and the stagnation of bureaucratic planning, the bureaucracy could not go on. While centralised planning, together with working class self-sacrifice, was able to produce dramatic initial economic advances, the rate of growth could not be sustained without a democratic plan and the spread of the revolution. But this would have meant an end to the rule of the Stalinists. So instead they led "the socialist bloc" into stagnation and decline. This prompted the ruling bureaucracies to experiment with "economic reforms" which inevitably tended to strengthen market forces and to disintegrate the planned economy.

While in the Soviet Union this led to a creeping paralysis within the bureaucracy, in China, Deng Xiaoping created a social base for pro-capitalist reforms by re-establishing private agriculture and creating capitalist enclaves in the coastal provinces. By 1989, the tensions this generated throughout society had created the "democracy movement" which was finally crushed under the army's tank tracks in Tiananmen Square.

In the USSR, market reforms were introduced to stimulate production and moderate political reforms aimed to win back popular legitimacy. But it was too late to save the Party's rule. Under Gorbachev the Soviet bureaucracy recognised that it could not risk Tiananmen-style repression and withdrew its support for the East European regimes, signing their death warrants.

Mass popular uprisings against bureaucratic dictatorship brought Stalinism crashing down across Eastern Europe in 1989. The terrified rulers of the USSR were divided, preparing the way for Gorbachev's own demise in 1991, the dissolution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the re-establishment of a capitalist state.

In China, the Communist Party vowed to avoid this fate; they resolved to restore capitalism themselves. Newly admitted to the WTO, open again to the multinationals, China today is wracked by mass layoffs, factory closures and bitter struggles of the workers and peasants. Of "Communism", nothing is left but the mocking symbols of one-party dictatorship.

Leon Trotsky's famous prognosis that the bureaucracy would either be overthrown by the working class or would drag the USSR back to capitalism has been proven correct, with tragic consequences for workers in eastern Europe, Russia, central and South East Asia and China. Stalinism has completed its historic mission.

Outside of the former workers' states, the Communist Parties have completed their transformation into social democratic parties. Their strength and significance is entirely dependent on national circumstances and the fortunes of rival reformist parties.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) is the largest and most significant party of the vast and powerful Indian workers' movement. But the CPI(M) has long since made its peace with the bourgeoisie, governing West Bengal on behalf of the capitalists and

scarcely bothering to dress up its neo-liberal policies in the language of Marxism.

In Italy, the Communist Refoundation Party organises powerful working class forces against the neo-liberal policies of the capitalists and global institutions. It has however been unable to break from the fundamentally left reformist electoralism of the old Italian Communist Party. It vacillates – forming class collaborationist governmental coalitions with bourgeois parties and walking out of them when the pressure from its militant base and electorate gets too strong. Its leaders are “part of the problem” of the crisis of working class leadership, but its rank and file are potentially “part of its solution”.

Revolutionaries demand that the leaders of these parties break with the bourgeoisie and take the road of struggle, while striving to organise their supporters among the working class and the youth independently of their leaders, around a programme of revolutionary struggle.

By contrast, in Russia, the Communist Party has managed to concentrate within itself all the putrefaction of decaying Stalinism. Divorced from any movement of workers fighting for freedom and socialism, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation supports the market, opposes re-nationalisation of industry and talks of the need to unite “the Red tradition of social concern with the White tradition of nationality, great statehood, imperialism and spirituality.”

The party is infamous for its resort to anti-semitic demagogy. In the second Chechen war it condemns all talk of peace as surrender to “Chechen terrorism” and supports racist policies against Caucasians in Russia’s major cities. Many factory directors belong to the party; most have transformed themselves into “crony capitalists” and have ransacked or taken ownership of their own plants.

Today, only Cuba and North Korea remain bureaucratically degenerated workers’ states under the rule of Stalinist parties. Despite the striking differences between them – the Castro regime showing many features of its populist origin in the 1959 anti-imperialist revolution, the Kim “dynasty” heading an ultra-Stalinist totalitarian dictatorship imposed by Stalin and Mao Zedong – there is no workers’ democracy in either.

Nevertheless their ruling bureaucratic castes for the time being keep capitalism at bay within their borders and resist the US drive for the restoration of the “free” market. Revolutionaries must deliver active solidarity with these states against capitalist restoration, counter-revolution and imperialist economic and military aggression.

Here too, however, time is running out for the parasitic bureaucracy. Either the workers will overthrow this caste and establish the rule of democratic workers’ councils, or it will lead them into the hands of imperialism. Every restriction on the democratic rights of the workers and popular masses must be resisted, and the rights of women, and lesbians and gays must be championed. Every secret deal with the imperialists and their corporations must be exposed, the failures of bureaucratic planning stigmatised. Only along this path can we save these states from joining the ranks of the restorationists.

The defeat of Stalinism and its lasting influence over the working class remains a burning necessity. Once again, socialism must become a byword not for the cul de sac of bureaucracy, but for the rule of workers’ councils, democratic planning, internationalism and human emancipation.

The Anticapitalist Movement

In the last years of the twentieth century a new wave of overtly anti-capitalist struggles developed in North America, Europe and certain semi-colonial countries. The target of its hostility is variously described as “corporate globalisation”, “neo-liberalism” or, most accurately, “global capitalism”. A wave of protests rocked the global gatherings of the neo-liberal elite. At Seattle, mass demonstrations forced the cancellation of the 1999 WTO summit. Further protests followed around the world against meetings of the IMF, World Bank, World Economic Forum and G8. In 2001 in Genoa, 300,000 marched in the face of bloody repression.

The new anti-capitalist movement challenges particular features of globalisation and imperialism. These include the crushing burden of the foreign debt on the non-imperialist countries and the privatisation of public services. The movement opposes the cuts in social and welfare provision demanded by the IMF and the WTO’s arm-twisting tactics to force free trade upon the South so as to wipe out the rivals of the big corporations. Anti-capitalist activists have also resisted the imposition of the US-designed new world order and the “war against terrorism”.

The anti-capitalist movement is an alliance of different social forces and classes. These include middle class political parties like the Greens, academic critics of globalisation and liberal institutions like many of the Non-Governmental Organisations campaigning against poverty, underdevelopment and global inequalities. The programmes of the NGOs active in the anti-capitalist movement range from calls for more state investment in infrastructure through to third world import substitutionism. Just as their goals are utopian, so most restrict their tactics to legal and non-confrontational methods. They reject class-based politics, promoting instead a broad coalition of “civil society” to restrict corporate power.

Calls for a tax on foreign exchange dealings or the closure of “tax havens” barely scratch the surface of capitalists’ privileges and leave their class power unchallenged. By accepting the patronage of reformist parties such as the French Socialist Party, the Italian Democratic Left and the Brazilian PT, one wing of the movement seeks to regenerate reformism.

This has all coalesced in the World Social Forum, founded in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The clear intention of the liberal wing of this movement is to restrict all action to legal protest. Ultimately, it will seek to redirect the masses mobilised by the anti-capitalist movement into the dead end of electoralism. The struggle to prevent this and to defeat the agents of the liberal bourgeoisie within the anti-capitalist movement is a central task.

The anti-capitalist movement also includes more radical parts of the labour movement: militant trade unions, left reformist parties, ex-Stalinists, vacillating centrists and revolutionary Trotskyists. It has drawn in militant indigenous and poor peasant organisations.

On the left wing of this movement are radical populists, ecologists and anarchists. These forces certainly want to destroy corporate power and the state – but they reject the tactics and strategy needed to do this. It is these forces that have given the movement the name anti-capitalist. But their programme is utterly utopian – they want to “return” to a localised small-scale economy, based on either individual ownership or decentralised co-operatives. Above all, they reject the most important means for defeating capitalism – that the working class should take power.

The anti-capitalist movement is in flux. It can disintegrate, the victim of its own incoherence; it can become an instrument for the recrudescence of a new international reformism, or it can develop to a higher level, fusing with a revolutionised workers' movement and allied movements of the exploited oppressed and exploited.

To seize the opportunity that the re-emergence of mass anti-capitalism represents, the working class and revolutionary youth need, above all, an organisation with a clear line of march. Out of the formless chaos of competing goals and methods, unity of purpose must be forged. A clear programme of action and a new global party are needed to link the multitude of contemporary struggles to the common goal of revolution.

The Old Illusions of the New Anarchists

In the last years of the twentieth century, anarchism found new life as a political force in North America and Europe. In the face of the collapse of the eastern European regimes and the shift of social democratic and labour parties to neo-liberalism, it provided a radical alternative for young people wanting to build a better world. The new anarchism emerged from radical ecological movements and organisations like Reclaim The Streets. It was strongly anti-State and anti-authoritarian, often seeing in the traditional Left as big an enemy as capitalism.

Despite the variety of its forms, all anarchism is opposed in principle to the state: both to putting demands on the capitalist state and to the creation of a new working class state. This stems from its rejection of authority, which ranges from an individualist opposition to ALL authority through to the insistence of “anarchist communists” on restricting working class organisation to only the weakest federation of locally autonomous bodies. The new anarchism, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, stressed maximum autonomy for the individual and spontaneity in struggle.

Most anarchists correctly understand that the state's purpose in capitalist society is to defend the capitalist class. But they refuse to recognise that prior to social revolution the class struggle makes it essential for workers to attempt to force this state to make concessions to the working class (shorter working day, minimum wage, taxes on wealth, democratic rights and so on). They even reject partial demands which destabilise and help break up the state (transitional demands).

Thus, for consistent anarchists, standing or voting in elections – even where the candidate uses this platform to agitate for revolution – is anathema, because it “consolidates illusions” in the state and authority. This means that anarchists systematically absent themselves from the main times when society as a whole is debating political issues. Instead, they issue abstract denunciations of all politicians, calling on people not to vote. This has led the most “consistent” anarchists to reject the fight for reforms, such as re-nationalising utilities or even calls for taxing the rich, defending democratic rights or supporting oppressed nations' struggle for independence. How can they oppose such elementary advances for the working class? Because to demand that the state act is to “recognise” the legitimacy of the state.

Against the “trap” of the ballot box, anarchists counterpose a do-it-yourself reformism at a local level, which necessarily lacks all the resources in the hands of the national state or even the municipality. Thus, this reformism is necessarily petty in scale

and conducted on the margins, or behind the back, of society. It can never really challenge reformism from within the struggle for the practical improvement of the life and conditions of the great mass of the workers, peasants, and urban poor.

Last, but not least, anarchists fail to recognise that in a state based on democratic workers' councils, the working class could rule society. How the highly centralised power of capitalism can be smashed by anything other than a centralised organisation of the working class is a question anarchism has never answered and never will. Anarchists wish to "abolish the state" in the first act of the revolution, failing to see that the loss of centralised state power by the capitalist class will not end their resistance. A long and bitter civil war is to be expected for which centrally coordinated bodies, a central council of the delegates of local workers' councils, a government, an army, will be needed. This is nothing more nor less than the dictatorship of the proletariat that the anarchists reject in horror, and even fought against arms in hand in Russia between 1918 and 1921.

Their whole outlook is utopian – taking no account of the practical everyday needs of working people. In practice, many anarchists do, indeed, support trade union struggles and even local-level reformism, despite their "authoritarian" and bureaucratic leaderships. Likewise, when great issues are at stake in elections, such as the threat of fascism in the 1930s, mass anarchist forces have capitulated to "politics" and even entered a bourgeois government in Spain in 1936.

Anarchists make a fetish of "direct action" – blockades, sit-downs, fights with police. They often refuse to participate in "peaceful" mass mobilisations which do not involve such tactics. By doing so they evade the task of challenging the reformist leaders and winning their supporters to truly mass "direct action" – political strikes, boycotts, occupations, organised self-defence.

The different strands of anarchism have different approaches to trade union activity. The new anarchism makes the sectarian error of rejecting the unions as organisations of struggle, in fact turning its back on the working class. Others make the error of wanting to build their own "pure" anarchist unions, again ignoring the task of influencing the members of existing mass organisations. Equally wrong is the opportunist practice of the "workerist" wing of the anarchist movement who approach trade unions uncritically.

Above all, by rejecting the organisation of working class parties – not just bureaucratic parties, but also parties based on working class democracy – anarchists oppose the most important tool for overthrowing capitalism.

As with the role of the workers' state, anarchism fails to understand the role of a revolutionary party. When a revolutionary party is described as a vanguard, this means providing revolutionary leadership to the mass working class, not imposing the will of a small elite on the majority. Only genuine democratic centralism can provide coherent leadership and organisation to the mass working class movement while remaining accountable. A revolutionary party can also bring the most class-conscious workers together to act collectively and challenge the reformist ideas of trade union leaders and bourgeois parties.

While anarcho-syndicalists promote the utopia of one big union and one big strike to put the economy in the hands of the unions and turn society into a free federation of local communes, some of the more post-modernist influenced anarchists have turned to a guerrilla war of tiny direct actions against capitalism, co-ordinated via the alternative

media. Some have even come to the fatalistic conclusion that destroying the ‘beast’ is impossible and that the best that can be done is to find enclaves in which they can live out their utopia. In fact, any local alternative communities can be attacked and liquidated by the state long before they become a threat to capitalist rule.

The solution that anarchism has traditionally posed to the question of organisation is the federation of autonomous collectives or communes. But federalism is a weak and problem-riddled idea. With no agreement by separate collectives to follow regional or national decisions, a minority can effectively hold the majority to ransom or, worse, simply go their own way. This would not only be disastrous in a situation of civil war but also in the effective organisation of the production and distribution of goods. From the negotiated ‘co-ordination’ of completely autonomous producing units, a market would inevitably emerge in the sphere of distribution, giving rise in turn to propertied classes and a distinctly ‘non-autonomous’ outcome – class rule. Federalism is itself a utopian solution to the very real problem of how the working class must organise, from the smallest action committee to society as whole.

The theory of anarchism is littered with ideas of spontaneous and un-led social revolutions. But without a conscious revolutionary leadership, history has shown all such attempts pass power back into the hands of the capitalists. Faced with the mass anarchist unions (the CNT) joining a bourgeois government, and the practical tasks of civil war, more radical anarchists such as the Friends of Durutti during the Spanish Civil War recognised this weakness in anarchism and broke with its programme, calling instead for a revolutionary junta and working class rule.

The influence of new forms of anarchism has destructive effects on the ability to organise mass actions. Many oppose voting, insisting instead on “reaching a consensus”. This means either that the lowest common denominator – the most limited proposal – carries the day or that those with the loudest voices are privileged in the debate. Democratic co-ordination of mass organisations and of demonstrations is replaced with “affinity groups” in which a small group of friends find themselves with the same weight in a discussion as the mass organisations of the working class. Most destructive has been the banning of working class parties from participation in movements like the Social Forums – a move supported by the NGOs and indeed some of the reformist parties themselves, as well as by anarchists on the grounds of “rejecting politics” or stopping “authoritarian organisations”.

Nor can the anarchists agree on the methods of struggle to be employed, as can be seen from their ferocious debates on violence on demonstrations. Some see all violence as ruled out in principle because it is inherently authoritarian – this trend has the merit of being consistent in its refusal to recognise reality. Others invest violence with near-mystical powers, liberating the individual from paralysing respect for the state and private property. Here, opinion ranges between the mutually opposed strategies of non-violent direct action and symbolic property destruction (“trashing”) or even provocation of the state forces. Neither strand understands the role of violence in the revolutionary struggle – as something to be prepared and wielded by the mass movement through the formation of a mass, organised working class and popular fighting force.

Last but not least, anarchism has been unable to develop a programme that large numbers can give assent to and which coordinates their individual actions into a coher-

ent strategy for destroying capitalism and its state. This means that there are nearly as many variants of anarchism as there are anarchists. It means anarchism has repeatedly hybridised with other political currents, most often with populism, but also with bourgeois liberalism, nationalism, even Stalinism (sections of the autonomist movement in Germany and Italy).

At every level – theory, strategy, tactics, organisation and practice – anarchism is a dead end for the working class.

Populism against the people

In certain semi-colonial countries and regions wracked by neo-liberalism and globalisation, populism has re-emerged as a mass force and one which has found an echo in the anti-capitalist movement in the west, especially after the emergence of the Zapatistas in Mexico in the mid-1990s.

Populism has a long history. Over the last hundred years, mass populist parties emerged in the United States, Russia and Latin America. Intellectuals, responding to the suffering of the peasantry, the small farmers and the rural poor, developed a radical, sometimes even a revolutionary, movement against the rich and powerful.

In Latin America, they championed the indigenous peoples against the white elites. Apart from the farmers, the populists sought a social base amongst the working class, the lower middle class and a home market-oriented, “patriotic”, section of the capitalists. These classes were referred to together as “the people”.

The declared enemies of the populists were the big monopoly corporations, the financiers and bankers, the big capitalist ranchers and agribusinesses. In Latin America, they centred their attack on “the oligarchy” of latifundists (big ranchers), bankers and sections of merchants and capitalists who acted as agents of imperialism. Latin American populism developed a strategy of industrial development by import substitution, the promotion of state services and industries, measures in many ways similar to those initiated by the social democracy in Europe. It also tended to develop a cult of charismatic leaders, known as caudillismo, around figures like Lazaro Cardenas (Mexico) and Juan Peron (Argentina).

During the inter-war and post-war years, populist parties like APRA in Peru, the PRI in Mexico, the Justicialists in Argentina and the MNR in Bolivia represented the radical “anti-imperialist” force in their countries. They succeeded in tying the working class movement to the populist coalition, at first by radicalism and real social reforms, later by integration of the trade union bureaucracy and widespread clientelism (political favours).

In the years of the long boom, most of the populist parties became regular bourgeois parties – albeit with a nationalist rhetoric and a commitment to “development”. But in the 1980s and 1990s, one by one, they succumbed to neo-liberalism and abandoned their development programmes, just as the social democrats were doing in Europe.

But, from 1994, a new wave of populism began to emerge. It was boosted by the emergence of the Zapatistas in the Mexican state of Chiapas, amongst the landless poor fighting multinational agribusinesses and ranchers. This was not a traditional guerrilla force and it denied seeking to “take power”. Instead, it pursued a doomed strategy of stimulating social movements to surround, overwhelm and replace the state. In

Venezuela, a more typical caudillo, Hugo Chavéz, came to power with the support of the urban poor and sections of the armed forces.

The problem with populism is that it weakens the class independence of the working class, makes it dependent on “saviours from above”, and tries to convince it that patriotic sections of the capitalist class are reliable allies. Inevitably it resigns itself to national capitalist development.

In Eastern Europe too, after the downfall of Stalinism, a whole a range of populist parties emerged. There is a danger of the growth of populism in ex-USSR too as a result of the decline of industrial proletariat, the growth of a landowning peasantry and the large numbers of permanently unemployed.

Today, many activists in the anti-capitalist movement, under the influence of populist ideas, believe that if the working class claims a leading role in the struggle, it will somehow “divide the people”. They complain that working class leadership will in some way “exclude” the other social forces that must be won to struggle against capitalism. But the opposite is the case.

Wherever the working class comes to the head of the struggle, the masses, far from being divided, are united more powerfully than ever before. By forging an alliance with the working class, the peasantry and urban poor are not weaker, but stronger – for at last they have allies with the social power, discipline and collective strength to halt capitalism in its tracks and to create a co-operative social order.

Therefore populism does not result in some idealised “united people”, but allows the liberal intelligentsia and “radical” capitalist politicians to lead the movement back towards support for capitalism. Populism today, as in the past, is ultimately directed against the people.

Islamism – an anti-imperialist force?

The failure of social democracy, Stalinism and secular nationalism to break the hold of imperialism has led to the rise of radical Islamist movements in Arab countries, central Asia and around the world. In the Middle East and North Africa, Islamism rose at the expense of defeated secular nationalist forces.

Islamism was for decades an anti-soviet force – in the 1980s it acted as a tool of the USA in Afghanistan, Pakistan and beyond. But the seizure of power by Islamists in Iran, the arrival of US armed forces in Saudi Arabia, the impact of globalisation and above all of Israel's repression of the Palestinians, all re-oriented Islamism into an anti-American force, one which adopted a radical “anti-imperialist” rhetoric and in certain countries even took the road of struggle against US and imperialist forces.

When Islamist movements like Hamas in Palestine take action against the imperialists and the Israeli occupation forces, the working class should take concerted actions with them and defend them against repression. In the West, Muslim organisations and communities including Islamists have rallied to the mass movements against the US-led “War on Terrorism”. Here too, the working class should strive for common action with these movements against imperialist war and racism, defending the right of Muslim

people to practice their religion without harassment and intimidation. In particular we must reject the Islamophobic, 'Orientalist' ideology currently being promoted by ultra-reactionaries and the Christian right in the USA and beyond, that Islam is inherently more reactionary than the other world religions and should be driven out of "civilised" society in a latter-day Crusade.

But at all times and in all countries, the precondition for common action with Islamist movements is that the working class organisations should accept no restrictions on their freedom of action, agitation or propaganda – including propaganda against the reactionary policies of the Islamists.

The overall strategy of the Islamists is socially reactionary. Hostility to women's rights and to all democratic and secular freedoms makes them an enemy of the liberation of the poor, the exploited and the oppressed, despite their social demagoguery. Attempts to impose Sharia law strike at the liberties of the people, their rights to vote, to associate, to organise and to practice any religion they choose ... or no religion at all. Where Islamists denounce the evils of modern western capitalism, they do so not from the progressive standpoint of socialist development and human freedom, but from the reactionary standpoint of the clergy and the old propertied and landowning classes. Their goal is a society steeped in exploitation and oppression. Even their support of welfare for the poor comes at a high price – clerical control over social relations and private life. Their attitude to working class organisation – parties, trade unions, associations – is one of absolute opposition, up to and including the use of death squads against us. We support workers' self-defence against Islamic reaction and the overthrow of the Islamic regimes and their replacement by governments of workers and peasants.

Islamism's most powerful appeal to the radical youth of the Middle East, and the African and Asian youth of Europe, is its anti-imperialist rhetoric and its denunciation of secular forces for compromising with imperialism and Zionism. But in the final analysis, even this is a fraud. By opposing methods of mass working class struggle, the Islamists attempt to block the only force that can break the hold of global capital and its local agents. Instead they often resort to indiscriminate terror against civilian populations. This aids the imperialists by providing them with a pretext for savage repression, while disorganising the masses, causing them to rely on elitist guerilla organisations for their salvation, rather than on their own power and democratic organisation. But revolutionary condemnation of Islamist terrorism has nothing in common with the hypocritical "civilised morality", of state terrorists like Bush, Blair and Putin. For them, "terrorism" means all force used by people hostile to their interests. Compared with the actions of the USA in Iraq, of Russia in Chechnya, or of Israel in Jenin, Osama Bin Laden is a wretched amateur.

Wherever Islamists or fundamentalists are in power – Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan – they act as agents of the capitalist class and of compromise with imperialism. The only strategy that can secure freedom is one based on independent working class action, one which promotes the democratic rights and social emancipation of workers, women, poor peasants and youth, and which unites the struggle against imperialism with the struggle for the overthrow of the national capitalist class and its regime, whether nationalist, Ba'athist, military or Islamist.

A PROGRAMME OF TRANSITIONAL DEMANDS

The nature of transitional demands

Since its birth, the revolutionary movement has been forced to confront a problem: how to link the everyday struggles of the working class within the capitalist system to the struggle to overthrow it?

Millions of workers demand higher wages, shorter working hours, better healthcare and education. But even when these reforms are won, they are only temporary; the moment we lower our guard, the capitalists try to claw them back. And piecemeal reforms can never get rid of capitalist exploitation altogether.

On the other hand, if revolutionaries restrict themselves to making propaganda for the goal of socialism and do not participate in the struggle for reforms, they will never win mass influence among the working class.

To avoid this trap, the immediate struggles of the working class need to be transformed, so that they address immediate needs and challenge the power of the capitalists as a whole. They need to attack the fundamental pillars of the bosses' power – the “right to hire and fire”, “business secrecy”, the “right of management to manage”, control of the work process, ownership and disposal of workplaces and resources.

It was for this purpose that the revolutionary movement developed transitional demands. The programme of transitional demands acts as a bridge between the daily partial struggles of the working class and the struggle for socialist revolution. These demands are both the most effective way to resist the capitalists and a challenge to the essence of the system itself.

Transitional demands promote the formation of new organisations of working class control, directly challenging capitalist ownership and management. They help transform the organisations of the workers' movement and the consciousness of the workers. Each transitional demand embodies a fight for some element of direct workers' control over the workplace and society as a whole.

Globalisation from below

In the era of globalisation, we have to struggle from the outset not only at a local, but also at a world, level.

Recent moves towards common action against multinational corporate employers are immensely progressive. This trend to international organisation is also creating favourable conditions for renewing those national labour movements that have suffered heavy defeats and precipitate decline. It is the task of revolutionaries to give a conscious and militant expression to this.

We need to build links within the multinational companies (MNCs) and local enterprises, or between workers of similar industries. These links must be built not just between official trade unions but at workplace level, between rank and file workers.

We need an international struggle against the MNCs. This means we have to organise

co-ordinated actions aimed at disrupting their production links and the marketing systems. Solidarity action must be developed from the first day of each and every struggle. Likewise, when whole national labour movements in the second and third worlds take action to resist the “structural adjustment programmes” of the IMF, or the rulings of the WTO, they must command the fullest support from unions in the “first” world. Solidarity action must go beyond statements of support from leadership bodies. It must extend to industrial action, such as boycotting and refusing to handle the products of the firms in dispute, sending international delegations, taking strike action and occupying workplaces.

Fast solidarity action is needed whenever unions are victimised by their own national governments. This will not only create a new international conscious identity within the world working class – it will signal to the corporate bosses and politicians that the era of give-backs, privatisations and deregulation is at an end.

We must fight the “race to the bottom” of corporate globalisation. Instead we must level up labour, environmental, social and human rights conditions to the highest level yet achieved. Fights for raising wages, ending child labour, union recognition, democratic rights, should be at the centre of our activities. Force corporations, the national states, the regional blocs, the international financial authorities to concede demands for minimum conditions – not just charters of labour rights, but for workers’ control over conditions, minimum wages, social conditions, and for trade union and democratic rights. Wherever laws, regulations and guarantees from employers and states are secured, we must be ready to enforce them with industrial action.

We must open up the national and international forums, where decisions are really made, to inspection by the representatives of workers, peasants and poor communities. We must fight for the right to access the computer records of the banks and multinationals. This means encouraging and defending whistleblowers from within these secret corporate strongholds.

Trade unions must enforce global safety, welfare and education standards on global corporations. The trade unions must draw up a global charter of rights and conditions – then they must act together to enforce it in every nation, on every MNC. We must oppose plant closures or moving of MNC operations from one cheap labour zone to a cheaper one by solidarity action and a political campaign for the immediate seizure of their property without compensation if they refuse to concede to the workers’ demands.

Workers need to fight not for old-style “government regulation” or capitalist style nationalisation but real socialisation – collective, democratic social ownership, rooted in every workplace, extended across every enterprise, national and international. This can only be achieved by a struggle for the nationalisation of enterprises without compensation, and for workers’ control of each enterprise, over production and distribution of products and services.

We must expose the domination of politics locally, nationally and internationally by the big corporations and their huge bribes. We must break the workers’ and poor peasants’ organisations from these capitalist parties by exposing their inability to meet our demands. We need to build new parties of the workers and poor peasants whose strength is not corporate donations but on the streets and in the workplaces. Our workers’ parties might contest elections to win support for this programme of action but they will always explain that this is not where the power in society really lies.

We must open up the world media to the masses. A new weapon of struggle, which includes widespread use of the internet, is already being created from below in the media of the unions, peasant organisations, anti-capitalists in the west and communities in the third world. Whilst information alone is not power and the capitalist system cannot be destroyed by guerrilla media alone, we must defend alternative media against the inevitable attacks of the state and the millionaire media corporations of Murdoch and Berlusconi. The media for the millions, not the millionaires must be our battle cry. Our aim is to expropriate their huge media corporations and run them under workers' control.

We need to fight for planned, environmentally sustainable, development of the second and third worlds. As long as the majority of humanity does not have clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, primary and secondary education, it is sheer first world arrogance to talk of a "freeze on development" or "no economic growth". We can lower the living standards of the rich alright; we can decrease the enormous waste of hyper-consumerism in the first world; we can make enormous savings through cutting out the waste of blind production for profit – but we must increase production of the necessities of life for those who are presently denied them.

In agriculture, we must end the domination of corporate agribusinesses and the landed estates of the rich, and curtail overproduction for an unknown market. Make agriculture serve the well being of humanity within its natural and social environment! Instead of the goal of profit for the shareholders of the agribusiness corporations – the Chiquitas and the Monsantos – agriculture must meet the social goals of providing food for all, employing the rural population, and restoring the natural environment.

Destroy the IMF, World Bank and WTO

Recent programmes of "debt relief" have failed miserably to lift the billions of people affected by debt repayments out of poverty. Debt slavery must be ended and the semi-colonial world must be compensated for the plunder of its natural and human resources. In the G7 countries, we must fight for the unconditional and total cancellation of the debt to all the countries of Latin America, Africa, South and East Asia and Eastern Europe. In the debtor countries, we have to fight for the renunciation of the debt by their own governments.

Neither free trade nor protectionism under capitalism can meet the needs of human beings and their well-being on this planet. As long as capitalism exists, we are opposed to protectionism by the developed countries against the products of the global south. Here we are in favour of free trade. Abolish NAFTA, the Common Agricultural Policy and other protectionist weapons of imperialist states. However, we support the right of Third World countries to defend their markets from cheap imports from imperialist countries.

But workers should not tie their defence to the interests of their national capitalist class in the process, and should reject protectionism as a strategy since autarchic development is bound to fail, as it has always done so in the past (e.g. India in the 1960s). The answer to employers taking advantage of "cheap labour" in the second and third world is not to exclude their goods by tariff barriers but to use trade union and democratic pressure to raise the wages and social conditions of these countries to the levels of the "first world" and beyond.

Trade unionists in the imperialist countries must completely abandon demands for trade embargoes and high tariffs directed against their fellow workers in the semi-colonial world. Instead, to build our global strength, they must provide the fullest solidarity to workers fighting for union rights and higher wages in the semi-colonies and in the former “Eastern bloc”.

The drive of the IMF and WTO to privatise infrastructure and social services presently provided by the state must be resisted. The result, where the IMF and World Bank have succeeded, has been to make once free water, education and health provision unaffordable for millions of people. We must defend and extend these services at the expense of the capitalists, paid for by taxation and confiscation of profits. The heroic battles against water and electricity privatisation in Latin America and South Africa, involving general strikes, occupations, mass demos and road blockades, co-ordinated through local social forums, show the way forward. The IMF, World Bank and WTO must be abolished and the representatives of the South must immediately disengage from them and delegitimise them. Confront every one of their meetings and summits with mass blockades and protests!

Fight inflation and deflation

Inflation and deflation are both weapons of the capitalists to solve the crisis of their system at the expense of the working class. They hope to break the collective resistance of the workers by condemning them to a miserable individual daily battle for food. Against both inflation and deflation we say – “Make the rich pay”!

Under conditions where rising prices slash workers’ wages, like in Argentina in 2002, we must fight for a sliding scale of wages. This must guarantee a wage rise to match any rise in the cost of living of workers and their families. To make this effective we should build organisations to monitor prices. Delegates should be elected in the workplaces, in the barrios, from organisations of working class women and consumers who together can create a working class and poor people’s cost of living index. Pensions must be indexed against inflation and be guaranteed by the state, not left to the mercy of the stock markets.

In conditions of hyper-inflation and mass unemployment, these organisations can promote the struggle to take over supermarkets and wholesale warehouses to save the poor and the unemployed from starvation. In the longer term, however, securing complete control over the necessities of life means establishing workers’ control over the food industry, the large farms, food processing plants, transport and the supermarket chains. In many countries, it will also mean establishing direct commercial links between the workers and peasants over the exchange of goods. It entails the building of workers’ and peasants’ committees to control food pricing and distribution.

Deflation – falling prices – is an increasing affliction of the developed world as financial and asset bubbles burst. Workers are affected as the burden of their debts increases and the value of their future pensions is written down by crisis-stricken assurance companies. The state must take over all private pension funds, protect the value of pensions and put them under the control of the trade unions. Household debts of workers should be cancelled and credit provision companies nationalised.

To tackle inflation and deflation, we must seize control of the money supply – the central banks and main financial conglomerates, and force their complete nationalisation. We can then prevent the transfer of capital abroad when the rich seek to escape the consequences of their ruinous policies.

The scourge of unemployment

Unemployment is a permanent feature of every capitalist country. In the semi-colonies, the fall in raw material prices on the world market, privatisation and “free trade” for the MNCs, have devastated industry and agriculture alike. Agribusiness has driven millions of landless peasants into the cities where, unable to find work, they are driven down still further into the ranks of the lumpenproletariat.

In the imperialist countries, too, rationalisation, privatisation and the export of jobs to low wage countries have put millions on the scrap heap. Against this, we demand work for all. This can only be achieved by militant direct action against all redundancies and closures. There must be strikes, workplace occupations by the workers concerned, militant actions by the organisations of the unemployed, solidarity strikes by those not yet affected. Such struggles must set as their goal the achievement of workers’ control of enterprises.

Under the regime of workers’ control, work should be shared amongst all the workers in an enterprise, and the working week reduced to allow this – a sliding-scale of hours with no loss of pay. For the unemployed we fight for work or full pay – unemployment benefit paid at the level needed to maintain the worker and their dependants, as democratically decided by the labour movement. Such full benefits should be demanded for all those whom capitalism excludes from social production as a result of age, disability or sickness.

The unemployed must not be viewed as bystanders or auxiliaries in the fight against unemployment. In Argentina, the piqueteros have adopted the tactic of road blockades, which hit commerce and production so that the capitalists cannot just abandon their former workers with impunity. In many countries, unemployed workers’ organisations have proved a vital militant section of vanguard of the working class. But the unemployed cannot fight and win on their own. We need fighting unity between the unemployed and the employed.

We need democratic, mass movements of the unemployed workers, with financial support from the unions, but free from control by the bureaucracy and with full representation within the labour movement. Such organisations will play a vital role in preventing the unemployed falling prey to the ideology of fascism, racism, religious reaction, criminalisation and lumpenisation. They are a vital means of encouraging employed workers to take up an active struggle in defence of their own jobs as well as for their unemployed class brothers and sisters.

In order to integrate all the jobless into the production process, and to allow them to do socially useful work, we struggle relentlessly for a programme of public works under workers’ control, paid for by the capitalist state.

Throughout history, our every demand has been met with the cry that our rulers “cannot afford it”. When they reject our demands for decent wages in the state sector or for better social services with the argument that the budget would go into deficit, then we reply – tax the rich!

A steeply progressive income and wealth tax should be levied against them. With this revenue it will be possible to begin financing the needs of the masses. Tax the rich, not the poor. Indirect taxation on items of mass consumption, and income tax on the workers' wages, should be scrapped. If the rich try to conceal their assets or evade paying their taxes, then all their assets must be confiscated.

Social ownership and planned economy

Under capitalism, revolutionaries defend state ownership against privatisation because this makes all questions of hiring and firing, quality of service or product one for the whole of society and not a question of private contract between employers, employees and customers.

It is for this reason that the capitalist class does not want state ownership – or only tolerates it to socialise losses for bankrupt industries considered “too big to fail”. But such nationalised industries and services are not “socialist” – not even socially owned. The state which owns them is still capitalist and tries by every means it can to force the “public sector” to serve the long term interests of profit by subsidising the prices of raw materials, transport or energy charged to the big corporations.

Genuine social ownership means that the means of production and exchange, the means of transport belong to society, not to private shareholders or an authoritarian state.

Revolutionaries demand the nationalisation of the banks, key financial institutions, transport and utility companies and major industries under workers' control and without a penny given in compensation to the former capitalist owners. We demand the nationalisation of every enterprise declaring redundancies, or which refuses to pay minimum wages, observe protective labour legislation or pay taxes.

When there is no private ownership of the economy, “ownership” will be vested in those who produce, and those they produce for, at the appropriate level – local, regional, national, international. Anything that can be decided locally will be. Broader allocations of resources and exchanges of products will be done at a national, regional or world level. Since there will be no competitive struggle for profits, no hidden privileges for bureaucrats or experts, there will be no need for secrecy. Information about resources and decisions will be available to all.

We would not have a single, monstrous, bureaucratic central plan, such as existed under Stalinism, where everything was decided in one place by a caste of privileged bureaucrats. Under real socialism, what will exist will be an ascending series of plans at all appropriate levels, each decided on after debate in a workers' and consumers' democracy.

Transform the trade unions

To strengthen the trade unions as instruments of struggle and to break the hold of the conservative union bureaucracy, we advocate the establishment of rank and file opposition movements within and across the unions committed to:

- The election and recallability of all officials
- The payment of officials at the average wage of their members

- All strikes and pickets under the control of rank and file action committees
- Militant action, not collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

All strikes should be under the control of delegates of the workers on strike.

One union per enterprise – one union per industry: we support trade union unity on the basis of democracy and class struggle.

We support 100% trade unionism and the right of trade unions to enforce union membership as a condition of employment in every enterprise.

We fight for the complete independence of trade unions from the capitalist state, an end to state restrictions on trade union activity and the abolition of all laws limiting and penalising industrial action.

We fight for factory and enterprise committees to assert the workers' right to control production. We work for the establishment of inter-district and inter-enterprise committees of workplace representatives to break down sectionalism and undermine the ability of the bureaucracy to hold back the struggle.

Whilst always seeking to establish networks for direct action by the rank and file, militant workers should resist the temptation to "ignore the bureaucracy" altogether. Though this can seem at first sight to be a radical response, in fact it leaves them unchallenged by failing to demand that they break with the capitalists and assist the struggle of the workers. This means that an opportunity is lost to expose their true failings before the eyes of the workers who have not yet understood their reactionary role.

Without in any way forgetting the primary responsibility of militants to organise action directly from below, without in any way expressing faith in the officials or illusions in their willingness to fight or their commitment to the workers' cause, we demand of all union leaders that they break with the capitalists and end their policy of class collaboration. We demand that they quit their joint-boards with the employers, their national and municipal state offices and join the struggle on the streets and on the picket lines. We insist that they put the financial resources of the union not into funding bourgeois politicians but into support for strikers and their families, into defence funds for victimised militants, into campaigns to unionise unorganised workers.

We advocate the right of the socially oppressed (women, youth, racial and sexual minorities) to caucus within the trade unions.

Though we advocate a fight within the trade unions wherever possible to challenge and break the hold of the reformist bureaucrats, we do not flinch from a break with the apparatus of official trade unions and forming new unions where the needs of the struggle demand it.

Unions are united fronts of the class struggle. Their membership should be open to workers from the enterprise or industry they organise, not restricted on grounds of political affiliation.

Yet the slogan of "political neutrality" of the unions is a fraud on the workers – there can be no neutrality in the class struggle. Wherever this slogan is raised it can only aid the capitalists and the political monopoly of the bureaucracy within the unions. We struggle for the unions to support the policy of the revolutionary workers and aid the struggle against the system of wage slavery.

The outcome of this struggle depends on the strength and success of fractions of a revolutionary party and its sympathisers in the unions. Therefore we demand the unlimited right for revolutionaries to build political fractions in the trade unions, against all bans and restrictions on revolutionary activity and for a revolutionary leadership of the unions.

Workers' control and the fight against business secrecy

The system of capitalist exploitation requires that the bosses control every aspect of the production process. The search for higher productivity and profits endangers safety, erodes health and intensifies exploitation. Increasingly, therefore, the working class is obliged to counter capitalist control with workers' control so that even basic and partial demands are met. In essence, this means a fight to veto the plans and actions of the bosses wherever they harm the interests of workers.

Workers' control must not be confused with "workers' self-management", "workers' participation" or co-determination (the European works council system). This seeks – often by legal compulsion – to incorporate working class representatives into co-responsibility for the success and profitability of the capitalist business, observance of business secrecy. In times of prosperity, this ensures production uninterrupted by strikes and, in times of crisis, trade union consent to job losses, real wages cuts, productivity drives and an end to job demarcation.

But workers' control at the workplace level must always be incomplete. The capitalists keep their plans and accounts a closely guarded secret from their workers. Against business secrecy, therefore, we fight for the opening of all enterprise bank accounts, account books and computers, to the inspection of the workers themselves. If such investigation reveals genuine bankruptcy then we demand socialisation of the enterprise under workers' control and enforce it by occupation. The abolition of business secrecy is designed to expose the bankruptcy of the capitalist system as a whole, its corruption, dishonesty and the mismanagement of the economy, its parasitism, its tendency to squander the wealth that workers create, and its grossly inequitable methods of distributing that wealth.

The greatly increased application of science and technology to production demands other forms of workers' control. Because the introduction of new technologies is subordinated to capital, its consequences are more and more concealed from the workers. They get to know about them only through rationalisation, work hazards, intensification of work or through environmental disasters. This means that workers' control committees, based on the factory floor workers, must win the support and cooperation of technical and scientific workers.

The best form of organisation for conducting the struggle for workers' control is the factory or workplace committee. By organising all the workers in a workplace regardless of trade, shop, union affiliation or membership, the factory committee is able to unite the whole workforce, direct it towards a daily struggle for control and challenge the power of the boardroom. Moreover, it can play a role in the struggle to transform the unions themselves into class struggle industrial unions. The factory committee must be based on direct democracy, with delegates who are recallable, in daily contact with the workers and elected by shop and mass meetings.

Such bodies establish a regime of dual power in the workplace and their presence demands an answer to the question – who rules here, the workers or the bosses? As such they are characteristic of intense periods of class warfare. And, just as dual power in society cannot last for a protracted period without being resolved in favour of one of the contending classes, nor can it in the factory. The factory committee is compelled to advance, ever more audaciously, in the fight for workers' control. If it does not, it risks either disintegration or incorporation. Workers' control must be a launching pad for a struggle of the workers to assert their rule not just in one factory or office, but across society as a whole.

Reclaim our environment

Throughout history, human productive activity has involved degradation of the natural environment. Until the development of capitalism, these changes were local, leaving the bulk of humanity and the planet as a whole unaffected. Industrialisation ruined the immediate environment in which workers worked and lived and the working class movement, therefore, led the struggle to clean up these life-threatening conditions.

Capitalist driven consumer culture means overproduction and the creation of vast mountains of waste, poisoning the environment. Species of wildlife are dying out on a daily basis, and tons of poisonous fertilisers and weedkillers are sprayed on our foods to overproduce while products which do not fit the supermarket image of perfection are destroyed. At the same time big corporations are pushing for genetically modified organisms (GMOs) to enter our food chain in order to make yet more massive profits, gambling with our health and our environment.

Moreover, capitalist industrialisation and the plunder of the earth's raw materials threatened a qualitative change in the dangers to the life systems of our planet – because this was the first worldwide mode of production.

The increase in the scale of production in the twentieth century has created a situation where the whole world ecosystem is threatened. The destruction of the equatorial rain forests – the lungs of the world – threatens massive climate change. A man made cataclysm threatens to occur in the new century because of global warming. This will have terrible effects on human beings – social, economic and psychological. Agricultural decline, the spread of disease, starvation and stress will make a living hell of large parts of the planet. Already, the land, rivers and seas are contaminated with toxins and the very air we breathe deteriorates by the day.

The “Greenhouse Effect” is caused by increasing amounts of gases such as CO₂ in the atmosphere. The main causes of this increase are the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. The climate changes this causes already appear to be having the most serious consequences. Weather patterns will alter, leading to floods and droughts. Some parts of the world will get much hotter – others much colder. Water levels will rise as the seas warm and the ice caps melt.

The USA has systematically blocked and sabotaged even the weak global agreements (Rio, Kyoto, Johannesburg) designed to limit greenhouse emissions and climate change. This is because the interests of Big Oil – companies like Exxon – come before those of the world's population.

Capitalism is environment unfriendly by its very nature. Capitalists need ever-greater profits to compete, so resources are used up without regard for peoples' needs and the effects on future generations. Capitalists are reluctant to conserve resources, control pollution or recycle, as these are often "expensive" options. It is cheaper to pump pollutants into the environment than to clean it up.

Yet the combination of scientific and technological advance has created the potential of superabundance for all of humanity.

The working class has a vital interest in stopping capitalism laying waste to our world. Throughout its history, workers have fought to stop dangerous production methods and impose safety standards on the capitalists and on their state. Through forcing legislation on the ruling class, it has made tangible gains, helping to create a habitable environment in many cities and towns again. The working class can take the lead and rally the poor peasants, the inhabitants of the world's barrios, to halt and reverse this degradation.

Humanity needs a dramatic shift away from energy production based on the burning of fossil fuels and a massive investment in alternatives such as wind, wave and solar power. We need a huge global programme of reforestation. We need a massive expansion of public transport to combat pollution caused by the growth in use of the private car.

The working class and all those who see the need to save our planet must fight for strict controls and punitive penalties to clamp down on corporate polluters. Corporations – like the big oil companies – that defy these must have their property confiscated and their power broken.

Energy production through nuclear fission represents a severe environmental risk, particularly under capitalism since security and environmental measures are expensive and reduce profits. Nuclear energy must not be run for profit. We oppose privatisation and call for nationalisation of the nuclear industry.

The Chernobyl disaster proved, however, that state ownership in itself is no guarantee of acceptable security, if it is under bureaucratic control. We are for workers' inspection of all nuclear plants and closure of those found to be unsafe. We are for the fullest workers' control of nuclear plants' security – involving representatives of the employees, the local communities, the trade unions and environmental groups.

We oppose the indiscriminate closure of nuclear plants because of the acute threat of devastating climate change that would result from a shift to fossil fuel burning.

None of the above demands for a sustainable environment can be secured permanently on a national basis alone or without the seizure of political and economic control from the capitalists. Therefore in order to fight for a clean and safe environment we need to struggle for workers' control, the expropriation of capitalist corporations and a democratic global plan of production. Only in this way can we eradicate the huge disparities between overcrowded cities choking in traffic congestion and a deprived, depopulated, countryside.

A militant defence of the environment from the depredations of capital; a rational reconstruction of the urban and rural environment to abolish the disequilibrium between town and countryside; a socialist society based on social ownership and democratic planning: these are all preconditions for the construction of lasting, harmonious and free human communities in the twenty-first century.

Strategy and tactics in the semi-colonies

In the semi-colonial countries of the Third World, millions of people are denied elementary freedoms. In countries across Africa, Asia, South America and the former USSR, national independence is reduced to a sham – the real economic decisions are taken by global financial institutions and corporations. If these countries stray from the path of the ‘free’ market, they are bullied, bombed and blasted by the US and its imperialist allies. Peasants are denied land and markets for their products. Everywhere basic democratic rights are denied – to vote, to speak freely, to organise. After decades of neoliberal free market economics, the majority of the nations on this planet are held down in cruel underdevelopment.

The national capitalist classes of the semi-colonial countries cannot and will not lead a determined movement to free their nations from global imperialist control. They are too weak and too corrupt to do it; they are themselves connected to imperialism with a thousand economic and personal ties. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the capitalists led mighty revolutions to free nations like England, France and America for capitalist economic development. In the twenty-first century, the semi-colonial bourgeoisie is too weak to lead its own national revolution. It falls to another class to lead it, one with no stake in maintaining imperialist domination: the working class and its allies in the poor peasantry. The tragic history of failed revolutions in the semi-colonies over the last 100 years only confirm this central tenet of Leon Trotsky’s theory of permanent revolution.

By refusing to expropriate the companies, banks and land of the “national” as well as the imperialist bourgeoisie, by refusing to satisfy the demands of the poor and landless peasantry, the leaders of the revolutions in Nicaragua, Zimbabwe and the Philippines in the 1970s and 1980s ensured the continued prostration of these countries before the economic and military might of imperialism. Even in Burma, Egypt, Iraq and Libya, where military regimes nationalised the economy and created state owned infrastructures in the 1950s and 1960s, they failed to break the economic chains binding the country to imperialism. Stagnation born of autarky, a mounting foreign debt, the re-emergence of a national bourgeoisie outside the state sector: all marked the road back to subordination and super-exploitation.

Only where capitalism was completely uprooted (China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam) did revolutions challenge the grip of the imperialist world economy over their countries. But without the democracy of workers’ and poor peasants’ councils, and with leaders opposed to the worldwide spread of revolution, they were doomed to follow the path back to capitalism and subordination to imperialism.

The expropriation of the major industries, banks and finance houses, the imposition of a strict state monopoly of foreign trade, sustained efforts to spread the revolution internationally: these must be the first steps of every victorious revolution in a semi-colonial country.

A century of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle has proved a thousand times over that only the proletariat, mobilised in workers’ councils and a workers’ militia, can carry these tasks through in a consistently progressive manner. In the process, the working class must rally millions of peasants and semi-proletarians around the fight for national independence, agrarian revolution and the fullest democratic freedoms for the masses.

In the face of military aggression by the USA or other imperialist powers, the national capitalist class of a semi-colonial country is sometimes compelled to resist, as in Iraq in 2003. In countries denied even a vestige of independence, like Palestine or Chechnya, bourgeois forces can take the leadership of the movement for national liberation. In both these circumstances, the task of the working class is not to stand aside from the struggle; but to participate in it with the utmost energy. Temporary agreements for common action and struggle may be made with bourgeois nationalist and even Islamist forces. Indeed the working class must actively call for a united front of all forces – workers, peasants, petit-bourgeois and even bourgeois nationalists – for struggle against imperialism.

But the working class never ceases its struggle against capitalists and landlords. The working class must never simply dissolve itself into a bourgeois movement or subordinate itself to a bourgeois or petit-bourgeois leadership. The working class must always and everywhere strive to constitute itself as an independent force, with its own organisation and a programme expressing its own social interests. By calling for and building an anti-imperialist united front whilst always preserving its class independence, the working class should fight to bring itself to the head of the national struggle. It will constantly demand of its untrustworthy bourgeois ‘allies’ that they go further than their narrow class interests dictate, that they break all ties with imperialist capital, that they end all restrictions on workers’ organisations, that they arm the masses and that they mobilise the people themselves for the struggle.

The working class party will promote its own class methods of mass struggle as the most successful means of driving out the imperialists – but will not stop there. Rejecting with contempt all offers to govern in coalition with the bourgeoisie, the workers’ party will proceed to organise workers’ and peasants’ councils and militia and to pursue a forcible transfer of power into the hands of the workers and peasants. For revolutionary communists therefore, the anti-imperialist united front is never a strategy in and of itself. It is a tactic: a staging post on the road not only to the defeat of imperialism but to the overthrow of the national bourgeoisie itself. In short, only the working class can make the national democratic revolution permanent, by completing the revolutionary reconstruction of the nation under its own leadership.

Revolution in the countryside

Today, in many semi-colonies, the peasantry remains an absolute majority of the population. The dissolution of the colonial empires and the establishment of US world hegemony meant global capital’s deeper penetration of agriculture. Huge territories were placed under cultivation for cash crops for export. Millions of peasants were bullied, defrauded and expelled from their land. As a result, countries which were self-sufficient in food have been transformed into importers of the basic necessities of life.

The most radical figure in the countryside is the landless peasant, robbed of his or her inheritance by the oligarchy and foreign agribusiness. Today, there are hundreds of millions of landless peasants. In the Indian sub-continent, in Central and South America and in Africa, a huge proportion of the rural population is landless. They stream into the barrios of the huge cities which have sprung up over the last thirty years. This class is a key actor in the global revolution of the twenty-first century.

The revolutionary working class must fight to realise the demands of the rural poor: land to those who work it – support the land invasions of farms, latifundia, ranches, plantations. For committees and militias of landless peasants. Building voluntary co-operatives is essential to fight food shortages. For those already driven to the barrios of the big cities, we must fight for a programme of public works to find them useful work and a living wage.

Struggling to prevent their own descent into the army of the landless are the poor peasants. Their smallholdings are either weighed down with onerous rent obligations or burdened with debt as a result of harsh purchase terms. Borrowing to buy equipment and fertilisers has added to this debt, a step forced on them because the size of their plot cannot guarantee subsistence for the poor peasant family.

For the poor peasants we demand: abolition of rent and renunciation of all debts to the rural usurer, the urban banker and the merchant; free credit to purchase machinery and fertiliser; incentives to encourage subsistence farmers to voluntarily join production and marketing co-operatives.

But the struggles of the rural poor point in one direction the necessity of a workers' and peasants' government which will expropriate the land of the oligarchs and the multinational agribusinesses and place them under workers' and poor peasants' control. We need a massive programme of public works to improve conditions for the masses of the countryside – electrification, irrigation of the land, provision of clean water and adequate sanitary facilities and the construction of cultural facilities.

The solution to land hunger, high rents, crushing debt and primitive technique can only be reached through an alliance of the peasantry with the working class in the revolutionary overthrow of global capitalism.

National liberation

Since 1989, more and more oppressed nations, racial and ethnic groups and indigenous peoples, have demanded freedom from oppression and domination. The compulsory unions of peoples such as the former USSR or Indonesia have either broken up or are beginning to do so. Compulsion or national oppression of any kind stands in the way of international solidarity.

The working class, youth and popular masses of the oppressor nations must fight in solidarity with the oppressed. They must oppose all violations of national rights: for the right to learn and use one's own language, equal rights in education and at work, equal rights of citizenship. They must fight for the right to self-determination of all peoples – including their right to form separate states if they so wish.

At the same time, since small states are even more at the mercy of the megacorporations, the imperialists and their allies, we need to fight for regional and continental federations of states under the rule of the working class and poor peasants. National unity and independence were no mere political ideals for the bourgeoisie. They had a practical economic purpose: the creation of a unified national market, protected against foreign competition, within which domestic capital could expand. This expansion worked so well for the initial capitalist states that capital flooded out into the non-capitalist world subordinating it to the old centres of capital.

In the first period of imperialism, this meant the division of the world amongst colo-

nial powers. After the Second World War, when the “American century” began in earnest, the colonial empires fell apart to be replaced by formally independent states. But, despite this, the former colonies are, in reality, no nearer to economic independence than they were at the dawn of the imperialist epoch. They remain oppressed nations.

The chains of economic dependence are forged from capitalist social relations and can only be smashed by the expropriation of capitalism itself. For this reason, only the working class has the interest and ability to fully abolish the national oppression of the semi-colonies – which starts with the removal of imperialist forces. We must fight for the expulsion of all of NATO, US and UN-sponsored armed forces, installations and advisers and the abolition of the standing armed forces trained by and loyal to imperialism and their replacement by an armed workers’ and poor peasants’ militia.

The arbitrary borders carved out by imperialism in its division and re-division of the world in the 1880s, 1919 and, (hand in hand with Stalinism) in 1945, divided many nationalities and peoples, creating national minorities within the colonial and semi-colonial states

Far from solving the many national problems caused by imperialism’s division of the world, the inability of the semi-colonial bourgeoisie to unify or economically develop the nation results in the deepening of regional economic differences, the re-emergence of old national antagonisms and the creation of new ones.

Wherever a movement against this national oppression develops, the proletariat must support this people’s right to self-determination up to and including the creation of a separate, independent state. Once such a demand is embraced by the mass of workers and peasants, expressed for example in referenda or by mass armed struggle and civil war, revolutionaries must take a leading part in such a struggle. Their goal is for the working class to take power – the strategy of permanent revolution.

The proletariat is an international class — a class with no fatherland. Our general programme is not for the creation of ever more nation states or the breaking up of large “multi-national” states into their national constituent parts. Secession is not the only means of liberating such countries from imperialism or national oppression. A combined struggle of the workers of the oppressor nation with the oppressed can lead to a voluntary union or federation.

While the working class must champion the legitimate national rights of oppressed peoples, it should fight nationalist ideologies, even those of the oppressed nations, which foment divisions and poison international solidarity.

Against the imperialists’ policy of controlling weak and unstable nation states by dividing them against each other (Balkanisation), we call for voluntary federations of socialist states as a step towards a world socialist federation.

Tear up racism by its roots

Racism has spattered the pages of modern history with the blood of hundreds of millions. Slavery, ethnic cleansing, cruel discrimination, the defamation of entire peoples, deportation and even outright extermination – these are the bitter fruits of racial hatreds which have been systematically created and reinforced by global capitalism.

Despite the hypocritical claims of Western liberals, racism is not dying out. On the contrary, it is on the rise. Black and Asian people, Latin American and eastern European immigrants and migrant workers, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, Jews, indigenous peoples and many other racial groups face routine discrimination and oppression across the globe. Indeed the list is almost endless. Lower pay, fewer job opportunities and unemployment, insecurity and uncertainty, police repression, routine imprisonment and deaths in custody, restriction of access to education and healthcare, denial of citizenship rights, travel restrictions and daily abuse mark the experience of millions. Racism pervades all spheres of life in modern societies.

Racism both creates the conditions for super-exploiting part of the international working class, and aids the capitalists in dividing the workers, weakening our resistance. That is why any struggle that aims to defeat the system of global capitalism must confront racism in all its forms.

Modern racism first arose with the expansion of capitalism from Northern Europe across the face of the globe. Capitalists enslaved millions of Africans from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. The English and Dutch merchants and American plantation owners publicly upheld equality and the “rights of man” – so the Black African slaves whose families they destroyed and who they worked to death had to be defined as something less than human. This was modern racism in its earliest, “purest” and least disguised form.

Slavery was abolished by the mid-nineteenth century, but racism lived on. The onset of imperialism in the nineteenth century led to another surge of racism – this time arming itself with pseudo-scientific credentials. In the white settler colonies, indigenous peoples were driven off their land and exterminated. In the USA, segregation and loss of civil rights reversed progress made when slaves were freed after the Civil War. In “civilised” Europe, anti-semitism reached a scale of unimaginable cruelty, culminating in the Nazi Holocaust of 1943-45 in which millions of Jews, Roma and Slavs were annihilated.

In Russia, after the triumph of Stalinism, the bureaucracy used Great Russian chauvinism and anti-semitism to divide and rule, discrimination, abuse and outright persecution was visited not only on Jews but on the nationalities of the Caucasus, Central Asia and many other ethnic groups.

After the Second World War, colonial liberation struggles in Africa and the Black civil rights movement in the USA struck heavy blows at official racism. The downfall of Apartheid South Africa destroyed the last state explicitly based on the doctrine of white supremacy. But the oppression of black people continues the world over; Africa is still under the heel of imperialism. In the USA black people remain deeply oppressed – fewer jobs, lower pay and imprisoned in disproportionate numbers. In South Africa, even under the rule of the ANC, the black majority are still denied social and economic equality.

Today, racism is again rising dangerously in Europe and America, with an outburst of racist laws and demagoguery from the state. In particular this scapegoating of immigrants and asylum seekers has also led to direct physical attacks from fascists and the far right. In central and eastern Europe, Roma people face police and fascist persecution and mass unemployment. In the cities and towns of Russia and the Ukraine, Chechens, Tatars, and members of other communities from the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Crimea are harassed by the state and attacked by racists and fascists. When Roma, and other

oppressed peoples flee to the West, they face state racism including internment, harassment, deportation, and a horrific campaign of public vilification.

The Patriot Act in the USA and the ever stricter controls in Fortress Europe are subjecting immigrants and racial minorities to unprecedented levels of surveillance, restriction of movement and denial of legal rights. Conservatives, liberals and social democrats hypocritically point to the threat of the far right to justify “democratic” repression. Refugees from the wars and conflicts sponsored by imperialism and from the poverty global capital causes are denounced as “fraudulent” seekers of asylum and once again blamed for all society’s ills. But immigrants are not the cause of scarce jobs, declining healthcare, low pay and poor housing – they are the greatest victims of these ills. The working class must see through these racist lies and defend the victims of oppression, not side with their masters.

Global corporations want to export capital wherever they make the highest profit – but the capitalists refuse to grant free movement of labour. It is a lie that there is too little space and too few resources for people to be fed, clothed, housed, educated and to work wherever they choose to live. There is enough to go round – so long as it is allocated for need, not for profit. Therefore, we demand the abolition of all immigration controls and the closure of all detention camps for asylum seekers and refugees. We demand equal rights of citizenship for all, regardless of race, nationality or country of origin.

We demand the immediate scrapping of all racist laws and equal pay and conditions for all workers. Black people and all racial minorities have the right to self-defence against racist attacks. They should receive the fullest support for this from the working class movement. We call on all working class organisations to link up with movements of the oppressed and to build self-defence squads against racial attacks.

The official labour movements of the imperialist countries, led by class collaborators, all too often share the racism and chauvinism of the ruling class. Some scandalously suggest that the racially oppressed should remain passive, or patiently endure racism, in the interests of “unity”, until the mass of white workers and their organisations are gradually educated in anti-racism.

This is an unpardonable concession to racism and the privileges of whites. True fighting unity can only be achieved if the working class responds with militant struggle to all attempts to persecute and discriminate against the victims of racism. It is in the interest of the “native” working class to smash fascist and racist terror movements and to confront every manifestation of racism in education, the media, the workplace and the public services.

The racism of the white workers is a terrible Achilles’ heel. It can only be overcome by winning them to anti-racism now, not in the distant future. To do this, they will have to listen to and take a lead from black workers fighting their own oppression. None are so fit to break the chains of racism as those who wear them.

Wherever they feel their interests are ignored or underrepresented, racial minorities have the right to organise, to identify and confront racism and discrimination, including by establishing caucuses within the trade unions and working class parties. We must make it a priority to promote black and oppressed workers to take up positions of leadership. Fools believe that this will “divide the movement”. In reality it is the precondition for unity.

The roots of racism lie in global capitalism. Its overthrow will lay the foundations for a new society, one in which racism can – at last! – be consigned to the dustbin of history.

Women's liberation

Women are the majority of humanity but everywhere they are condemned to bear the greatest part of the burden of childcare, cleaning and cooking. This is the basis of all other forms of sexual inequality – economic, legal and cultural. Women's wage labour is systematically paid less than that of men. They suffer discrimination in access to paid work and oppression at work.

In many parts of the world women are still consigned to the home, subjected to male guardianship, denied basic democratic and economic rights and subjected to oppression and violence from men if they break the religious rules which sanctify all this. In the sweatshops of the Third World, women workers are routinely abused, denied maternity leave and subjected to degrading treatment.

Even in countries where formal legal equality has been won, women still bear the double burden of paid work and domestic labour. This life of double toil excludes most women from real equality of access to political and social life.

The majority of women will only be liberated and free from discrimination when the economic foundations of class rule and male supremacy are overthrown. Whilst the deep roots of this oppression lie in ancient class society they are reinforced by global capitalism. Only a socialist society, run for human need rather than private profit, will be able to get the whole of society to take on the domestic duties which today are mainly performed by women in the home. Only then will women be able to realize their full potential.

A socialist society would promote collective childcare, cooking and cleaning and an equal distribution of housework and childcare between men and women in society as a whole. Women will no longer be forced to perform these basic tasks separately in isolated family units. The social provision of these services – well funded and democratically run – could be a million times better than the provisions made in the family today. In this way, real choice, a high standard of living and real sexual equality can replace the poverty, isolation and oppression facing working class women today.

Around the world, we fight for the same legal rights won by the women's movements of the imperialist countries in the early and mid-twentieth century. Equal rights for women – rights to vote, rights to work, rights to education, unrestricted rights to participate in all public and social activity.

Equal pay for equal work is still beyond the reach of millions of women because work tasks have been redefined to avoid it. It must be implemented. Part-time workers should be on permanent contracts with full protection from early dismissal, sick and holiday pay entitlement. Free 24-hour childcare should be provided and funded by taxing the rich. All women need access to free contraception and abortion, on demand, regardless of age. With the deregulation of working hours, the provision of 24-hour childcare has become an even more urgent need so that women can enjoy a social life and participate fully in political activity.

Today we see a moral backlash against women's rights: abortion clinics are under

attack; services are cut while “family values” are promoted to put the burden of care back on the shoulders of women. Contraception and abortion must be defended against attacks by right wing forces and access to these must be free, on demand and regardless of age.

Sexual harassment at work and domestic violence must be exposed, confronted, outlawed. Fully-funded refuges must be provided to allow women to escape violence at home. Women should have the right to an immediate divorce on request and all co-habiting women (married or not) should have an equal right to share in the household assets upon separation or divorce.

Women have been drawn more and more into workplaces by globalisation. This is a positive fact insofar as it gives women more economic independence, reduces their isolation in the home and draws new fighters for freedom into the struggle. But, as always, capitalism does not do this for the benefit of women workers. It does it because it believes women will work for less and will continue to look after children and the home for free. As in the 19th century in Europe, it is also only too willing to use child labour to make its super-profits.

The increase of women’s work largely in part-time and casual jobs goes hand in hand with a neoliberal attack on the service sector. This forces women to look for work that fits around their domestic commitments, while the availability of secure full time jobs has reduced. Overall globalisation has changed the form but maintained the essence of women’s oppression, which is their continued responsibility for household and family.

The struggle for women’s liberation is widely identified with feminism, since workers’ organisations have failed consistently to take up the issues. But does feminism lead to women’s liberation? Since feminism locates women’s oppression solely in the relationship between men and women and separate from class society, it promotes the strategy of women of all classes joining together to fight their oppression. This is a dead end, because ruling class women do not share an interest in fighting the low pay, poor housing and lack of access to healthcare that cause millions of women to suffer every day.

In every country we should campaign for a mass proletarian women’s movement to fight alongside men against sex discrimination, the oppression of women and the super-exploitation which grows out of it. In the workers’ movement, we make it a priority for women to take up shop steward/delegate and leadership positions at all levels and we advocate the right of women to caucus to encourage and fight for this.

Free sexuality from state and religion

Gay men and lesbians suffer terrible oppression. Only in a handful of developed countries were the laws which criminalise gay sex repealed in the 1960s and 1970s. Even here, “exposure” can still result in traumatizing expulsion from home, harassment at work, and sacking. Many people are driven to suicide or their lives made permanently miserable. Churches, temples and mosques keep up a ceaseless barrage of homophobic abuse that is, in itself, an incitement to violence.

In most countries, gay sex still leads to imprisonment and even the death sentence. Yet same gender love and sex has existed in all known societies. It is as “natural” as heterosexuality. Nonetheless, in all modern societies, gays and lesbians are abused in the media, subjected to physical assault and even brutal murder.

Revolutionaries insist that sexual orientation and all consensual sexual activity must be a private matter — a matter of personal choice. Individuals should be entitled to engage in any form of consensual sex; to choose their gender; to dress as they please. We demand state recognition of the legitimacy of this choice and an end to all discrimination (e.g. refusal to legally recognise lesbian and gay marriages or partnerships). Likewise transsexuality should be legal — people should be free to change their sexual characteristics and adopt the gender that they wish.

Discrimination on the grounds of sexuality should be prohibited. We should fight for anti-discrimination laws, campaigns against homophobia and the right of lesbians and gay men to self-defence.

The sexual freedom of lesbians and gays is a measure of the freedom of all. Those states and religions that persecute homosexuality invariably interfere with and regulate heterosexual freedom, too.

In the early twentieth century the revolutionary Bolsheviks legalised homosexuality — the first government in the world to do so. Yet Stalinism and social democracy returned to reactionary policies — which are still in force in Cuba today.

We live in a society that criminalises and bans countless forms of sexual expression, including consenting sex between young people. Banning consensual sex does not protect young people from abuse. Most of this occurs within the family. It is rife in care homes and orphanages, especially those run by the churches. A world that denies the sexuality of young people also denies the existence of sexual abuse and makes the victims feel to blame, rather than teaching young people in advance about problems they may face and to speak out about them.

There should be no laws against consenting sex and no criminalisation of “underage” lovers. There should, however, be laws against rape and domestic violence to protect children from abuse. Neighbourhood and school committees should confront perpetrators of violence in the home. Sex education must be provided for everyone, including children.

All over the world, and in ever increasing numbers in the semi-colonies, women, girls and boys are forced into prostitution because of financial hardship. The illegality of prostitution means that prostitutes are one of the most stigmatised and marginalised groups in society. Sex workers can and must be organised in order to fight for their rights. We demand an end to the criminalisation and harassment of sex workers, full access to healthcare, a living wage and retraining for free. Sex workers’ unions must be recognised and integrated into national union federations. They must have safe working conditions free from the control of organised crime and the dangers of life on the streets. The working class movement must demand the legalisation of prostitution under the control of the sex workers.

Liberation for the youth

Everywhere the youth are oppressed. In many countries, young people receive no guaranteed education. Where they do, schools mirror the basic inequalities and power structures of capitalism, denying young people any right to participate in decision making and subjecting them to petty disciplinary controls.

At work, young people are especially exploited, receiving lower wages and weaker legal protection than other workers. Training schemes pay poverty wages, ignore basic safety standards and have no guaranteed job at the end of them.

Throughout Latin America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, western corporations employ children in sweatshop factories, on miserably low wages and without protection or decent conditions of work.

On the street, young people are victimised and harassed by the police. When capitalist societies go to war for profit, it is the youth they send off to die.

The root of the oppression of youth lies in the family. Capitalism, like all class societies, relies on the private family to perform basic social functions such as child-rearing. In the bourgeois family, the child is almost entirely without rights and subject to the dictatorship of the parent, a situation that poisons the relations between children and parents. This underlying inequality can and does give rise to resistance.

Every young person who wants to establish his or her own personal and sexual relationships, pursue their own interests and shape their own lives knows that at some point they will have to challenge parental authority.

For all of these reasons, young people have always been in the front ranks of the forces fighting for freedom. Today, it is the youth that form the largest and most militant detachments of anti-capitalist fighters confronting the summits of the IMF, NATO, World Bank and G8. In Palestine, the youth provide the bravest and most self-sacrificing fighters against the Zionist occupation. In December 2001, it was young people who came to the fore in the Argentine street battles that brought down the government of de la Rúa.

In every country, revolutionaries must turn to the youth: to help them organise, to champion their rights, and to rally fresh forces to the fight for a future free from oppression and war.

We must end child labour. The exploiters' profits must pay to educate the victims of economic child abuse and to employ alternative workers aged 16 or over on trade union rates of pay. We must fight for free education for all from infancy to the age of 16 and higher education and training to all who want it, at 16, on a guaranteed living grant. We need jobs for all young people on wages and conditions equal to older workers'. We must fight to scrap cheap labour training schemes – replacing them with apprenticeships on full pay with guaranteed employment afterwards.

We demand a massive programme of construction of publicly owned schools and colleges. We oppose all religious or private control of schooling and fight for secular, state-funded education. Curricula should be established and schools managed democratically by the teachers, parents and students themselves.

We fight to end all restrictions on young people's cultural, sexual and political self-expression and for access to education about sex, contraceptives and, for young women, for abortion on demand. We need youth centres and decent housing, funded by the state but under the democratic control of the youth who use them.

The democratic rights of young people have to be increased with the rights to vote at 16 or earlier if they are employed – those old enough to work are old enough to vote! We oppose attempts to criminalise youth through lowering the age limit for criminal

responsibility. No to compulsory conscription of young people into capitalist armies – but training in the use of arms should be available to all.

The labour bureaucracy fears the vitality and anger of the youth. Wherever reformist parliamentarians or trade union officials find it necessary to organise young people, in youth wings or movements, they always try to stop them voicing their own demands. They allow them no opportunity to debate democratically and subject each campaigning initiative emanating from the youth to deadening official control.

Revolutionaries fight to build the future, not to conserve the past, so they have no fear of the youth. On the contrary, revolutionary communists must everywhere promote the building of an autonomous, revolutionary youth movement.

Because of the specific condition of young people and the character of their oppression, the revolutionary party should not treat the youth organisation as a subordinate, junior department. Instead, it must champion the organisational and political independence of the youth movement.

Members of the youth organisation, which can be looser and more open than a disciplined combat party, must have the right wherever legality permits to make their own decisions, determine their own activity, debate and decide upon their own policies and, if unavoidable, make their own mistakes.

But this in no way means that the revolutionary communists abandon young militants to their fate and refuse to offer them leadership. On the contrary, members of the party must seek to guide and influence the non-party members of the youth movement, to win it to an effective programme of activity, principled tactics, a perspective of growth among the working class and radical youth, a spirit of internationalism and self-sacrifice and a revolutionary communist programme.

In many countries today, the seeds of this movement are emerging. They must be united in a global revolutionary youth movement.

The struggle against fascism

As social crisis mounts and social democracy in power proves wanting, the far right is on the rise across Europe. The growth of fascist front parties in Italy, Belgium and France testifies to this. Under conditions of deep crisis, the bourgeoisie can use a fascist movement to maintain their rule against the working class. Fascism, a reactionary mass movement mainly recruited from the ranks of a petit-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat made desperate by the crisis of capitalism, has as its goal the destruction of the independent workers' movement and the establishment of the rule of finance capital unfettered by any elements of bourgeois democracy whatsoever.

It is a last resort for the bourgeoisie since it involves the suppression of its own parliamentary representatives. As Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy showed, it is a measure that will be taken if the situation demands it. In the semi-colonial countries, fascism can develop as a movement arising out of communalist conflicts or out of reactionary clerical movements. The phraseology of such movements can sometimes be anti-imperialist. But this should not blind us to their anti-communist, anti-working class nature.

This rhetoric is in the same mould as the demagogic "anti-capitalism" of the Nazis.

With the triumph of communalism or clerical fascism in the semi-colonies, the rule of imperialism will remain intact or even be strengthened.

From the moment that fascism emerges, the working class must wage a merciless struggle to smash it. Even when it conceals its more general aims and concentrates on spreading the poisonous fumes of race hatred, the workers' united front must be organised to fight it. We call on all working class organisations to build a mass workers' united front against the fascists.

The workers' movement should not recognise or respect the democratic rights of fascist movements because they are instruments of civil war against the working class movement and the oppressed. But we do not call for them to be banned by the capitalist state. The bourgeoisie cannot be entrusted with this task since they are the ultimate backers of the fascists. In fact, the state will use bans to disarm and hamper resistance to fascism. Instead, the revolutionaries fight to mobilise the working class around the slogans: no platform for fascists, drive the fascists out of the workers' organisations!

We must physically confront every fascist mobilisation and organise workers' defence units to combat fascist attacks on the racially oppressed and the workers' movement.

The struggle to defend the democratic rights of the workers from military dictatorship and fascism will only be finally won through the overthrow of the system that spawns them: capitalism.

Against militarism and imperialist war

Capitalism repeatedly causes wars. Hundreds of millions died in the wars of the last century. A third world war would be unimaginably destructive, threatening the very survival of our species. The USA and its NATO allies resort to bloody air attacks and full scale invasions to control oilfields, strategically important areas and generally to intimidate the subordinate states of their informal empire.

Between wars, a vast proportion of social production is devoted to "defence" spending. Vast areas of land are made unusable or highly dangerous with minefields, toxic chemicals and radiation. In 1991, the world's rulers proclaimed the end of war and a vast "peace dividend". Yet, only a decade on, the USA is leading the world into a new wave of rearmament. Only capitalism's final and total abolition can bring peace to the world.

In all countries, the working class must insist – not a man or woman, not a cent for the military machine. In the imperialist countries, "defence of the homeland" is a gigantic fraud to get the workers to defend the ill-gotten gains of their own oppressors – stolen both from themselves and from the workers and poor of the oppressed countries. The words of the Communist Manifesto remain completely valid: "the working class has no fatherland". The workers of all countries are sisters and brothers. If we need our international solidarity and organisation in times of peace, we need them all the more in time of war.

But the resistance of the countries exploited by imperialism to its attacks is justified and must be supported by the world's workers – even when brutal military dictators lead this resistance. It is not these regimes that we support but the victory of their countries and their peoples over imperialism.

In the imperialist countries, the working class must use all the methods of the class

struggle to work actively for the withdrawal, retreat and defeat of “their own” armed forces. We do so by building a huge anti-war movement based on the mass organisations of the working class, and rallying around it young people, women, the progressive middle classes and the immigrant communities.

This movement will probably contain many people motivated by religion and by pacifism. Whilst we will march alongside them against the bosses’ wars, we are not ourselves pacifists. We do not spread the illusion that war can be abolished under capitalism if men and women of all classes simply will it. We ourselves do not condemn all wars or all those who wage them. We support the resistance struggles, including full-scale wars, by the exploited and oppressed against their exploiters and oppressors.

Britain’s war against Argentina over the Malvinas, that of the US-led coalition against Iraq in the Gulf War, that of the US and its allies in Afghanistan, pursued predatory goals. Such wars can do no good for the working class at home and only strengthen reactionary forces abroad. Workers should campaign for their rulers’ defeat in all these wars.

Should the imperialist powers once more come to blows with one another – as happened twice in the last century – workers must be unswerving in their opposition to their rulers’ war, continuing the class struggle. Whilst not working for the victory of the other side, defeat for our rulers would be a lesser evil than a victory gained with the workers’ support.

The sufferings of the masses – due to casualties, destruction and hunger – will lead to open hatred for the war. Thus, our slogan is not for “peace” but for “revolution” and “all power to the workers” – in order to put an end to the war.

The reformist mass organisations become ferocious patriots once war comes into view. The union bureaucrats demand that workers’ gains and rights should be sacrificed wholesale to the needs of the “nation” – speeding up production and suspending the right to strike. Here, our slogan is, “the main enemy is at home”. By intensifying the class struggle, defending every working class gain, making no sacrifices of wages and conditions, we aim to turn the imperialist war into a civil war.

In the event of war between semi-colonial countries, such as India and Pakistan we do not support the victory of either state and continue to prosecute the class struggle irrespective of any consequences this has for the war effort. Nevertheless, concrete conditions may alter this: if one combatant is acting as an agent for imperialism and the other defending its independence, then it is necessary to defend the latter.

In no case can we support imperialist intervention even when – as in Rwanda, Bosnia or Kosova – the pretext is to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide, to restore democracy and human rights or deliver humanitarian aid. We warn the oppressed not to call for such intervention, not to make alliances with the imperialists, not to express the slightest confidence in them and to demand their withdrawal.

The ability of the imperialists’ war machine to massacre millions at a stroke strikes fear and alarm into the hearts of billions. Faced with this threat, left reformists and pacifists preach the need for world disarmament through the United Nations and the banning of war from the planet. This, however, leaves unanswered the questions, “How are our rulers to be disarmed and by what means?”

They will never give up their arms voluntarily as a result of a vote of the United

Nations or in an international disarmament conference. That they must be disarmed is certain. But who can disarm them? Who is powerful enough? Only the working class and the oppressed masses can do this.

How? By social revolution! By wresting control of the armies and police forces from the generals and by winning over the soldiers and destroying the paramilitary police bodies. These are not defenders of the people but instruments of repression at home and of plunder abroad. In times of social crisis they are the weapons of dictatorship. They will have to be replaced by the armed people.

When movements which challenge and undermine armaments programmes mobilise tens of thousands of workers and youth in direct action, revolutionaries fight in the front rank of such actions. We argue at the same time against the utopian slogan of “disarmament” and for the need to take the weapons from the hands of the ruling class by taking away their control over the men and women who wield them, overthrowing the general staffs along with the capitalists.

The war industries are immensely profitable for the ruling class. We fight to expose their business secrets, to confiscate their military profits and to expropriate them under workers’ control. In opposition to their obscene armaments programme, we demand a programme of useful public works.

Even in times of peace, the imperialists construct pacts to defend their own interests, by the threat of military intervention. We demand the dissolution of all imperialist dominated military alliances – and, in the first rank, NATO. All secret treaties and agreements should be exposed and published.

We denounce the mistreatment of soldiers by their officers. We support the struggle for full citizens’ rights for soldiers, the setting up of soldiers’ committees and unions, the demand for the election of officers.

We oppose the draft and military service under the control of the bourgeois state and its officer corps. Instead, we demand universal military training under the control of the workers and popular organisations. However, where there is universal conscription we, the revolutionaries, join the armed forces to carry out revolutionary agitation among the working class conscripts. A class that wishes to free itself from slavery must learn military skills.

The state

Just because the adult citizens of the capitalist democracies are entitled to vote every four or five years, this is supposed to be “the rule of the people, by the people, for the people”. But the people have no say over what is produced, the nature of the economic system, or even whether to have peace or go to war. What exists in reality is rule for the capitalists by capitalist politicians.

News, debate, public life are in the hands of a tiny clique of media millionaires like Rupert Murdoch or Silvio Berlusconi. Political parties founded by the working class have been transformed into conservative clones.

Debates over policy and programme have been replaced by personality contests. Election campaigns become staged events made up of soundbites and photo opportuni-

ties. To raise the players of the political game above the slightest pressure from their party members or voters, millionaire donors pay the enormous costs of campaigning. In the Third World, this is called by its real name: corruption. But now, in the first world, too, parties regularly expose each other's sleaze and scandals.

This poisoning of the roots of capitalist democracy brings its own reward. In prosperous times, apathy; in times of crisis, a burning hatred for all politicians. In the oldest democracies, the phrase "they are all the same" is commonplace. In Argentina, in the crisis of 2001-02, the middle classes as well as the workers took up the slogan "Get rid of them all!"

Behind the façade of this democracy stands the state. At its core is an apparatus of repression which protects the profits of the rich and the powerful. Engels long ago defined the essence of the state as "special bodies of armed men" – armies, police forces, and their auxiliaries: the judiciary, the prison system, the top state bureaucrats. In the most democratic republic and the most brutal dictatorship alike, the state remains an instrument of capitalist class rule.

The real character of the state is revealed by who it defends and who it attacks. Repression on the picket lines and demonstrations, surveillance, targeted at "the enemy within", the growing prison population, all reveal that the police – and the soldiers when necessary – are the private security guards of the rich and the powerful, not the guardians of the people.

Do the police ever arrest an employer for taking away a worker's means of life, their job? When an employer brings in strike breakers and the workers respond with a picket, the police rush to defend the scabs' "right to work" with clubs and tear gas. If workers occupy a workplace to prevent its closure, the police will storm in to restore it to its "rightful owners".

Democratic rights

The fact that capitalist democracy is a dictatorship of the rich does not mean that democratic rights are useless. After all, it was the working class that forced the big capitalists to grant democratic rights in the first place. Recurrent crises in the history of capitalism have driven the ruling class to attack the democratic rights won by the workers.

Over the last hundred years, there have been repeated attempts to replace democracy with military or fascist dictatorships. Very few semi-colonial countries have escaped extended periods of dictatorship. In Argentina and Chile in the 1970s, tens of thousands of working class militants perished or were tortured, imprisoned or exiled. Europe witnessed fascist dictatorships of unparalleled brutality, starting in the 1920s and continuing in southern Europe into the 1970s.

In the Anglo-Saxon countries, the ruling class pride themselves on "an unbroken tradition of democracy". At the same time, they strip away democratic rights through anti-union laws, the curtailment of freedom of speech, the strengthening of the executive against the legislature, the extension of the repressive apparatus. The "war on terrorism" has led to an unprecedented assault on civil liberties within capitalist democracies.

Revolutionaries fight to defend democratic rights because, in doing so, we are

defending the very existence of the workers' movement and its ability to wage the class struggle. We defend the right to strike, freedom of speech, of assembly, of political and trade union organisation, the freedom to publish and broadcast. We demand the removal of all undemocratic elements in capitalist constitutions – monarchies, second chambers, executive presidents, unelected judiciaries and emergency powers.

After the downfall of a dictatorial regime, when the capitalists try to reconstruct a democracy, we should do all we can to prevent them reasserting control. For this reason, we should call for a constituent assembly – an institution more democratic than the capitalists will be prepared to concede. We call on the workers' movement to ensure that the deputies to it are not only elected in the most democratic manner but are also kept under the control of their electors – that they are recallable by them.

In the struggle to win, defend or restore democratic rights, the working class must never sacrifice its class independence, nor postpone the socialist revolution in the name of unity with a supposedly "progressive" or "democratic" section of the bourgeoisie. Wherever it has done so – in Spain and France in the 1930s, in Chile in the 1970s – it has lost both democracy and a real opportunity for socialism.

Every "democracy" is a state based on the rule of a class. There has never been, and can never be, a "classless" democracy, a state that defends the interests of all the people. The working class needs to come to the head of the fight for democratic rights as a means to an end – the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of working class democracy and socialism.

Defending our struggles – preparing our power

Every serious working class struggle, every struggle by the exploited and oppressed, needs self-defence. Strikers on the picket lines know that only a determined mass picket will stop the police ferrying in strike breakers and enabling the boss to carry on his business. In many countries, the bosses resort to assassination of trade unionists. Landless rural workers in Latin America face the gunmen of the big landowners or the imperialist agribusinesses.

Self-defence is no offence. We must organise self-defence in every struggle, wherever the right to assemble, to picket or to march is challenged by the state, the bosses, or wherever minorities or communities are attacked.

In every strike, we fight for picket defence squads; on every anti-capitalist protest we fight for co-ordination of the stewards; in every confrontation with fascists we fight for a popular anti-fascist militia. These are the first steps towards the formation of a workers' and popular militia – an organisation essential for the defence of our class today, and for its victorious revolutionary offensive tomorrow.

Mass forces are needed. Therefore, we fight for the mass organisations of the workers, the unions and the workers' parties to create organised forces. Wherever democratic freedoms allow it, we must organise the militia publicly, drawing in the youth, the unemployed, and women – all the most courageous and determined elements of the working people. Systematic training of forces is essential. Conspiratorial methods should embrace only the essential technical aspects of the matter.

Every step towards the workers' and popular militia helps the fighting layers of the working class to steel themselves in struggle. Its victories embolden the sections of workers not yet involved in the struggle, spread confusion and doubt in the hearts of the supporters of the enemy, help fracture the unity and cohesion of the police and military forces as well as the fascist gangs, and point the way forwards to the overthrow of the state.

A government of the workers and poor peasants

Economic crises and wars create no shortage of revolutionary opportunities for the working class. But these crises do not wait for the working class first to get its house in order. Often the question "who will take the power?" is posed before the workers have organised a mass revolutionary party of their own.

In these situations, the working class inevitably looks to its existing leaderships to serve its interests in government. Either by elections or by direct action, workers try to bring "their" parties to power. Revolutionaries know that in government the reformist leaders will serve the capitalist class by demobilising the struggle. Revolutionaries must always say what is. They must tell this unwelcome truth without equivocation.

But to leave things at this would be to abandon the whole method of our transitional programme. This programme is not an ultimatum to the masses. It does not demand of workers that they must first abandon their organisations before they can fight for our demands and slogans. Our programme is based on the interests of the working class – and, therefore, we want workers to demand that all workers' organisations should take them up.

For this reason, revolutionaries raise the slogan for a workers' government. We call on the existing workers' leaders – their unions as well as parties – to break with the capitalists and take concrete steps to solve the crisis in the interests of the working class.

The agitation for this, vigorously carried out amongst the mass base of the labour movement, can greatly increase the influence of revolutionaries. It can help in changing the attitude of the membership of the reformist organisations from passive reliance on whatever their leaders propose, to making demands for concrete actions themselves. It can expose the unwillingness of the leaders to stop servicing the capitalists even in the direst situation.

So long as the reformist leaders refuse to break from the bourgeoisie, so long as they use the state forces against the workers' struggles, we say that this is no workers' government but a government of the capitalists that has to be fought like any other.

But it is possible – even probable – that, in a deep and prolonged revolutionary crisis, a change will occur within the reformist parties and in their relation to the working class. Under pressure from their mass base, they may shift strongly to the left: this certainly happened in Spain in the 1930s, and in Chile and Britain in the 1970s. They may adopt radical proposals for reform, even measures of taxation, nationalisation and state control that really hurt and enrage the capitalists.

Were a government of such parties to materialise then, even if left-reformists, or even self-styled "revolutionaries", were to dominate it, it would remain a bourgeois government if it still rested on the armed forces and institutions of the capitalist state. Revolutionaries

could never join such a government. We would defend it from the capitalists' attempts to depose it while stepping up agitation for it to break with the bourgeoisie.

The danger of such a government is that, faced with the economic sabotage of the capitalists and the resistance or outright revolt of their state forces, it would break up, retreat or surrender, opening the road to the forces of counterrevolution. Then the revenge of the capitalists would be a bloody one.

Revolutionaries would call for decisive economic measures against capitalist sabotage – expropriation of their industries and workers' control. But we would not stop there. To prevent the threat of a coup, we would demand the building and arming of a workers' militia and the breaking of the control of the officer caste over the rank and file of the army. Only if the regime took these steps and based themselves on mass organisations of the armed working class would it truly be a workers' government.

The fight for a workers' government can be a bridge to the taking of power by the working class and the establishment of a revolutionary regime. But it is not an inevitable stage or schema. If the masses break free from their bureaucratic leaders, if the most militant workers build a revolutionary party and workers' councils before such governments come into existence, then the slogan for a workers' government will simply be a call for the workers' councils to take power.

Workers' councils and the struggle for working class power

The focal point of the programme of transitional demands is the formation of bodies that can unite all the fighting groups and co-ordinate them into an effective class-wide struggle. In different countries, and in different languages, such organisations have come into existence: councils of action, juntas, co-ordinadores, cordones industriales, and soviets.

These councils of employed and unemployed workers, peasants and the urban poor bring together delegates elected in every workplace, in every working class neighbourhood. The delegates must be subject to recall by their electors whenever a majority of them wish it. The delegates must not only decide on what to do but participate themselves in the implementation of their decisions. In this way, no massive apparatus of full-time officials will be necessary.

The first task of workers' councils is to co-ordinate resistance to capitalism across a city or territory and to link it up on a national basis. Their democratic character makes it easier for the masses to exercise control over their leadership and replace it if it tries to betray the struggle. Workers must be absolutely free to decide which parties they support.

Workers' democracy is the best – the only – antidote to bureaucracy. And behind bureaucracy stands surrender to the bourgeoisie. All the contending political forces in the working class movement must be judged by the masses according to whether their programmes serve the needs of the struggle and its goal.

Embryonic workers' councils can emerge in any heightened period of class struggle from existing fighting bodies: militant and democratic trade unions, factory committees, action councils built to support particular struggles, unemployed organisations. But such bodies alone, no matter how radical, cannot in themselves serve as workers' councils.

Workers' councils must transcend the factory, industry or section of workers. They must break down all sectional barriers and achieve class unity. By spreading the form of the council of recallable delegates to other popular strata and classes, by example, they can assemble the majority of the population even in industrially underdeveloped countries. In a revolution, they can and must win the rank and file soldiers to forming such councils.

Delegate councils arise only when society enters a revolutionary crisis, when the masses outgrow the confines of their traditional organisations and turn to revolutionary forms of struggle and organisation.

A revolutionary crisis exists when society reaches an impasse. The normal economic and political order breaks down under the impact of economic crisis or war. The ruling class is divided and racked by acute governmental crises. On the other hand, the mass of the people refuse to tolerate economic misery and the corruption of the old regime. On the streets, faced with the forces of order, they repeatedly demonstrate their will to sacrifice their lives to defeat it.

Workers' councils are a direct challenge to the capitalists' right to manage and control society. They represent the potential of an alternative state – one through which the working class can rule society. As long as they co-exist with a capitalist government, they will present a rival power. This dual power situation can only persist if the capitalists have lost control over their own armed forces or fear to use them, and if the leadership of the working class is unwilling to seize power. If this indecision is not broken, sooner or later the capitalists will incorporate, bureaucratised or crush the councils. The only way forward is for the councils to overthrow the government and create a working class state.

The insurrection

The capitalist state cannot be taken over and used for the purpose of introducing socialism. It must be smashed in the very process of revolution. For this reason, the general strike is a vital tactic on the road to power. It poses the question point blank: who rules society, the bosses who own it, or the workers who run it? It places the struggle for power at the top of the agenda. But, in itself, a mass withdrawal of labour cannot answer this question. The general strike must prepare the way for an armed uprising.

History shows that the working class can only deprive the capitalists of state power by violent means. Of course, the amount of force necessary will vary according to the balance of forces on the eve of the insurrection. It will depend on the extent to which the armed forces have been won to the side of the workers. Nevertheless the working class must be prepared for the maximum resistance from the bosses.

Without a revolutionary situation, in which the masses stand fully behind a revolutionary party, an insurrection led by a revolutionary minority will be an adventure and will set back the struggle. A revolutionary party must have won over the majority of the organised workers of the major cities and towns if the rising is to succeed and the new regime is to last.

Not all uprisings are the work of an organised vanguard leading the democratically organised masses. Spontaneous mass insurrections are many times more frequent, proving that revolutions are not the result of small circles of conspirators as capitalist prop-

aganda claims. The attitude of the revolutionary minority to such a spontaneous uprising is to participate fully in it, seeking to give it conscious leadership, especially through the fight for workers' councils and a revolutionary workers' and peasants' government.

The other type of insurrection is the conscious, planned, forcible transfer of state power to the working class on the model of the October Revolution in Russia. The carrying through of the insurrection is a technical task that demands conspiratorial planning. The workers' councils have to be won to the goal of insurrection and the workers' militia and the pro-working class regiments are the means of carrying through the rising. But the seizure of the key installations, the organisation of the new regime's defence, the distribution of arms and the allocation of insurgents cannot be left to the spontaneity of the masses or "enlightened officers". The revolutionary party alone can prepare and provide the leadership to direct a successful rising.

A revolution against the state

From the ruins of the capitalists' bureaucratic state will rise a workers' state rooted in the workers' councils. But it will be a state, nonetheless. The working class and its allies cannot simply dissolve all centralised power at a stroke, or abandon government.

Civil war against the capitalist class and its privileged supporters will not end when the workers overthrow their government. The forces of the old order will plan a bloody revenge and the restoration of their power. A localised, atomised working class "power" – with at best federal links and no powers of compulsion over the local or regional authorities – would be totally vulnerable to counterrevolution. To crush reaction as swiftly and decisively as possible will avoid the vast bloodshed that is always the result of counterrevolution.

For the minority of capitalist exploiters, this would be a dictatorship committed to removing their most cherished "freedoms": the freedom to own humanity's resources as their private property, the freedom to ruin lives for profit, the freedom to wage war. But for the majority of working class people, this state would be more democratic than any yet seen.

It will dissolve the capitalists' parliaments and judiciary and replace them with democratic councils and juries of working people. In short, it will be the dictatorship of the working class – not that of a single party let alone a caste of bureaucrats.

The twentieth century shows that a workers' state, if isolated in a single country and subjected to massive pressure from global capitalism, can fall victim to bureaucratisation and come under the control of a counter revolutionary elite. To avoid this, strict anti-bureaucratic measures must be applied from the outset. All official posts should be elected and rotated to avoid the coalescence of a permanent caste. Representatives should earn only the average wage of a skilled worker. All representatives should be subject to recall. All working class parties should be allowed to participate fully in the councils – only parties that fight arms in hand against the revolution should be suppressed.

A revolutionary state will be rooted in the daily self-administration and decision making of the majority of the people; it will be a state dissolving itself into society. As the working class socialises production and distribution and establishes social equality,

classes themselves will wither away and with them all remnants of state coercion. Eventually there will be neither rulers nor ruled but a free association of human beings organised on the principle: from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs.

Forward to the formation of a Fifth International – a new Global Party of Socialist Revolution

In the opening years of the twenty first century, resistance to imperialism, war and corporate capitalism assumed a truly global scale.

Vast mobilisations against international financial institutions, continental counter-summits, social forums of scores of thousands, cross-border actions and joint days of action – all these have changed the shape of the class struggle.

The idea of internationalism, for decades little more than an aspiration of the most militant and far-sighted activists, has become a practical reality, influencing and strengthening resistance everywhere.

This wave of globally co-ordinated resistance reached a high point in the world-historic action of 15 February 2003, when 20 million marched in every major city on the globe against the US/UK attack on Iraq – the highest level of co-ordinated anti-imperialist action in human history.

Internationalism has shaken the planet – now it must change it.

To transform the imperialist “War on Terrorism” into a global war on imperialist terror, to set millions in motion against the system that causes war, our unions and parties, our networks, forums and co-ordinations need to take a new and bold step: the formation of a Global Party of Socialist Revolution – the Fifth International.

We call on the hundreds of thousands that have assembled at continental and world social forums, the trade unions and anti-capitalist initiatives that have linked up in action around the world, the revolutionary youth to unite at the highest possible level. This means forming the new International as soon as possible – not in the distant future but in the period ahead.

Why take this step? Because the level of unity so far achieved – inspiring as it may be – is not enough to defeat the capitalists.

At present we can co-ordinate action. But we have not been able to break the hold of the union leaders and reformists over the mass organisations of the working class. That was why we could call 20 million onto the streets but still not stop the Iraq war. There were marches but no all-out strikes of the millions who can bring the world to a standstill. The reason: there was no global alternative organisation to the cowardly leaders who let us down.

At present we can discuss and debate the need for “another world”. But we have not set ourselves a common goal: the overthrow of the capitalists’ state power and the creation of a new power based on the working and popular masses.

We have many publicists and writers who expose, analyse and condemn the capitalist system. But we have no common programme, no guide to action that bases itself on

the hard-learned lessons of 150 years of anti-capitalist struggle. Without an agreed programme, the tragedies of the past loom ahead of us again as real and present dangers. Millions back Lula's Workers' Party in Brazil, which is sharing power with capitalist politicians and which has compromised with the IMF. The radical Italian party Rifondazione Comunista plays a prominent role in the anti-capitalist movement, but has shared power with the capitalists in the past, refuses to rule it out in future and preaches peace at all costs to the Italian workers and youth. Without a common programme, the movement has no alternative to the catastrophic error of governing with the bourgeoisie except Zapatist or anarchist fatalism, which renounce the struggle for working class power altogether and disorganise the revolution as a result.

We have no common party – and so can mount no united challenge for our own government, our own power.

Yet history is moving quickly – great opportunities to struggle for power have emerged in recent years and will occur in one country after another, with increasing frequency, in the years ahead. The vast mobilisations of February 2003 herald still greater days to come. Revolutionary crises and the chance to take power will emerge all over the world.

To arm the workers of each country with a perspective and guide to action; to correct errors that arise inevitably when a movement is restricted to a national terrain; to inform the workers of each country of the real events that face their brothers and sisters abroad; to draw the workers and peasants of every country into democratic deliberation of the tasks confronting the movement; to co-ordinate the struggle for power, fighting off the fatal influence of reformism, bureaucracy, nationalism and wavering elements of every type; to spread the revolution across national boundaries onto the continental and global terrain: these are the preconditions of victory. All these demand the formation of a new International.

This is no mere dream. The anti-capitalist workers have done it four times before. We can do it again. If we learn from the past, we can build on the successes of the first four Internationals, avoid the errors that led to their decline and defeat, and build a Fifth International to organise our global victory.

The First International proved that while it is possible to rally diverse forces to a world association of the workers, if part of the International resolutely opposes political struggle, unity cannot last for long. The Fifth International must aim to draw the broadest layers of fighting forces together – but it must quickly define its political goals, and resolutely reject any demands that we renounce the only methods that can defeat capitalism: working class government and working class power. Therefore, we will press for the International to pursue relentless political struggle, not fearing a rupture with anarchists, populists or the liberal publicists of the NGOs that cannot accept our class goals.

The Second International proved beyond doubt that political struggle, trade union action, electoral campaigning and widescale agitation and propaganda can rally mass forces to working class parties everywhere. But, when a bureaucracy emerges in a national labour movement, based on privileged sections of workers, it can quickly make its peace with the exploiters and back even the worst excesses of the bourgeoisie, marshalling the workers for fratricidal war as the Second International did in 1914 and as its national sections have been doing ever since.

Like the Second, the Fifth International must use the techniques of mass political action to rally not scores of hundreds in propaganda societies, but hundreds of thousands to parties of the working class. But we must never repeat the fatal error of tolerating reformist officials and careerist place-seekers in our ranks. Bureaucracy, national chauvinism, parliamentary or trade union reformism mean bloody defeat for the anti-capitalist movement. The fight for the Fifth International is inseparable from the fight to prize the workers' movement from the grip of warmongers and traitors. We call on working class parties that have taken the road of struggle against capital to rally to the Fifth International – at the same time we demand that they break irrevocably any links with the capitalists and drive bureaucratic traitors from their ranks. To do otherwise means to prepare the International for destruction at its first decisive test.

The Third International proved that to oust the reformist misleaders, to resist imperialist war, to unite the workers in struggle for our own power, the movement must combine the fullest internal democracy with centralised action on a global scale. Without democracy no possibility exists of genuine unity, of drawing the workers of all countries together to formulate an international strategy, of resisting bureaucratic control. Without strict centralism – requiring national parties and leaders to respect democratic international decisions – there is no possibility of resisting national pressures, no possibility of common revolutionary action. The Fifth International must combine the maximum internal democracy with the maximum unity in action; both are preconditions for effective revolutionary struggle.

The terrible fate of the Third International carries a warning for the future. If a revolution in one country fails to spread in time, if working class democracy is suppressed, if the goal of revolution is restricted to securing capitalist democracy, if coalition governments are built with capitalist parties, if a bureaucratic caste in one working class state abandons world revolution in favour of “peaceful co-existence” with global capitalism, then even the boldest and most potent of revolutionary parties can be transformed into its opposite: an instrument of counter-revolution.

Stalinism is a stain on the history of the working class movement. With it, no compromise is possible. Communist Parties that rally to the call for the Fifth International must break with its reactionary programme, its shameful methods and its cowardly goals. Without this, the International will never rally the new generation to the banner of human liberation.

Alone in the once-mighty Communist movement, the Fourth International stood against the horrors of Stalinism and the terrible defeats it inflicted on the working class. It passed on to future generations a priceless political heritage. Workers' democracy not bureaucratic planning; the rule of workers' councils, not the dictatorship of a privileged caste, internationalism, not national chauvinism; uninterrupted (permanent) revolution, not an endless bloc with the “democratic” capitalists; a programme that links the daily struggles of the workers to the seizure of working class power, not a catalogue of reforms disconnected from the final goal of revolution. There is not one of these principles that is dispensable today – all are urgently needed if the anti-capitalist and working class movement is to open the road to freedom in the twenty-first century.

It is now over fifty years since the Fourth International was destroyed as a revolutionary instrument. In the aftermath of World War Two, it abandoned its independent

working class programme and instead adapted its policy to left-wing social democrats and Stalinists, finally declaring that the “epoch of the Russian Revolution” is dead and seeking a new international only on a reformist programme. In Brazil its joined the capitalist government of Lula, governing with the bourgeoisie against the workers and peasants. In the anti-capitalist movement today, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International defends the most liberal and reformist sections of the movement against revolutionary criticism.

The main split from the Fourth International – the International Socialist Tendency – renounced almost every revolutionary principle of the International. Today it uses radical revolutionary phrases whilst systematically refusing to challenge the reformist trends within the movement. It explicitly states that a precondition of common action is suspension of revolutionary criticism and thus advances a hopelessly inadequate “Anti-capitalist Manifesto” for the movement. In Britain it stands in elections on a reformist platform and blocked the development of people’s assemblies in the mass antiwar movement of 2003. In Zimbabwe its supporters backed the MDC – a party of workers, capitalists and white landowners – instead of pursuing an independent class policy.

Another significant split from the Fourth International is the Committee for a Workers’ International. Yet this organisation refuses to offer a revolutionary alternative to the masses. It seeks to take advantage of the crisis of social democracy by fighting for the establishment of new mass workers’ parties; but deliberately and explicitly refuses to campaign for the adoption of the goal of revolution. Instead the CWI proposes a policy of taking power constitutionally, only subsequently threatening to arm the workers if the capitalists dare move against the “legal” government. This is the policy of Austro-Marxism that resulted in shattering defeat for the workers’ rising in Vienna in 1934. The working class cannot be prepared for revolution by a party that refuses to speak the truth: that the capitalists will never surrender peacefully; that an armed confrontation is inevitable; that the workers must prepare our own militia to smash the bourgeois state and forcibly seize the power.

These vestiges of the Fourth International follow a policy which in the history of movement has been called centrist. These organisations are revolutionary in words but prove unable to chart a consistent revolutionary course, independent of the bureaucratic apparatuses. They advocate and create political organisations that present to the masses only a diplomatic agreement between revolutionary and opportunist trends. This can achieve only one thing: the silencing of the revolutionary message and the shielding of reformists from revolutionary criticism.

Instead of analysing what is necessary for the working class and then fighting for it, the centrist fragments of the Fourth International adapt their policy to the prevailing consciousness of the working class at any given time. Centrist relies on the revolutionary “process”, the crisis, the spontaneity of the masses, to do the job that the revolutionaries themselves should do – point the way ahead, warn of the pitfalls, identify today’s false friends as tomorrow’s enemies.

The Fifth International must rally forces from across the anti-capitalist and workers’ movement. But there must be no let up in challenging the reformist programmes advocated by those who promote today a repetition of the failed methods of the collapsed Internationals. A “negotiated political settlement” between them may serve to unite bureaucratic leaders: for the fighting unity of the working masses, it is worse than useless.

Therefore, for revolutionaries, not only is criticism of the reformists necessary in the struggle for the new International, but so too is unsparing criticism of centrist vacillation.

Each of the four revolutionary Internationals embodied great gains for the working class movement and rich lessons for future generations. Yet each of them eventually succumbed to degeneration and collapse.

The urgent task of the world working class is to build a Fifth International, the most important weapon of all in the struggle against global capitalism.

Sceptics argue that it is “too soon” to found a new International. Nothing could be further from the truth. The lack of international co-ordination and leadership is the key weakness afflicting us today. To try to build each of our movements on its national terrain alone will result in repeating the defeats of the last fifty years. To remain at the level of networks will eventually paralyse the anti-capitalist movement and throw it into reverse. To take bold strides forward to global fighting unity – that is the central task in every country and on every continent.

Global capitalism is plunging the world into a new cycle of annihilating war. In reaction it is raising up once again its historic gravedigger: the global working class, and in greater numbers, with greater potential and more closely interconnected than ever before.

We still have a world to win. The chains that bind us are strong but our power has never been greater. If we will it, we can smash them to atoms.

Workers, peasants, revolutionary youth – unite in the fight for the Fifth International! It is the banner of unbroken struggle against capitalism and for your birthright – global human freedom.

